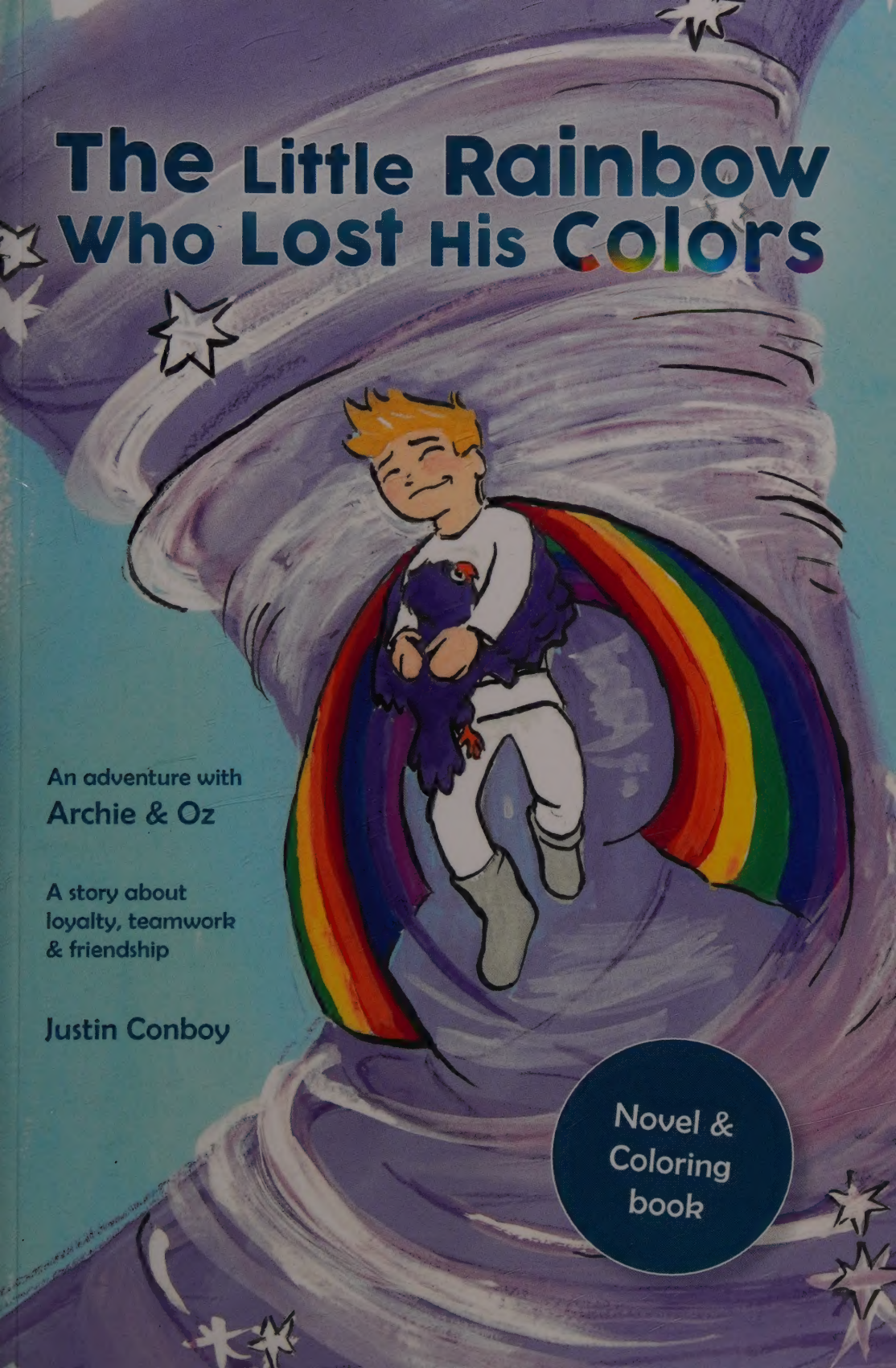


The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

The background of the cover is a swirling, purple and white storm. In the center, a young boy with blonde hair, wearing a white shirt and pants, is flying. He has a large, vibrant rainbow cape and is holding a small, dark purple bird with a red beak. The boy has a sad expression. There are several white, star-like shapes scattered around the storm.

An adventure with
Archie & Oz

A story about
loyalty, teamwork
& friendship

Justin Conboy

Novel &
Coloring
book

*The Little Rainbow
Who Lost His
Colors*

*By
Justin Conboy*

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Edited by Anne Cunningham

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First Print 2021

DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate this book to my mother.
You brought colour to my life, every day.
You inspire me so much.
I love you with all my heart.
I miss you so much.
Thanks for showing me the way.

14th of April 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank everyone who helped me in the production of
this novelle.

Especially Barbara, Anne, Little Sarah, John and Colm for their
extensive help.

I couldn't have done it without your hours of reviews, critiques
and attention to detail.

Coloring Book QR Code



SCAN ME

Please Use the QR Code to go online and get Printable **Black & White** coloring images of your favorite scene. You can also print out the original color images to hang on your wall.

1

The Scary Storm

Archie, the colorful little rainbow, was walking down a beautiful country road with his best friend; Oz. Archie was a young rainbow, full of energy and excitement. He always had a smile on his face. Archie and Oz were very different but were close friends all the same.

Oz was a very clever, wise old owl, thoughtful in every situation. Despite their differences, they had a lot in common. They were best friends for as long back as Archie could remember. They loved each other's friendship and company.

The two pals approached a local riverbank.

"I never asked you this, Oz. But why do they call you Oz? Is it short for Oswald or something?" asked the curious little rainbow.

"Nope! I'm an Australian Masked Owl," replied the owl in a confident manner as he flew up and fluttered around Archie's head.

"So, are you from Australia or the Riverlands, originally?"

The owl, landing on Archie's shoulder, paused and wondered.

"I don't know! I suppose Australia, or maybe the Riverlands." He was kind of stumped by the rainbow's question.

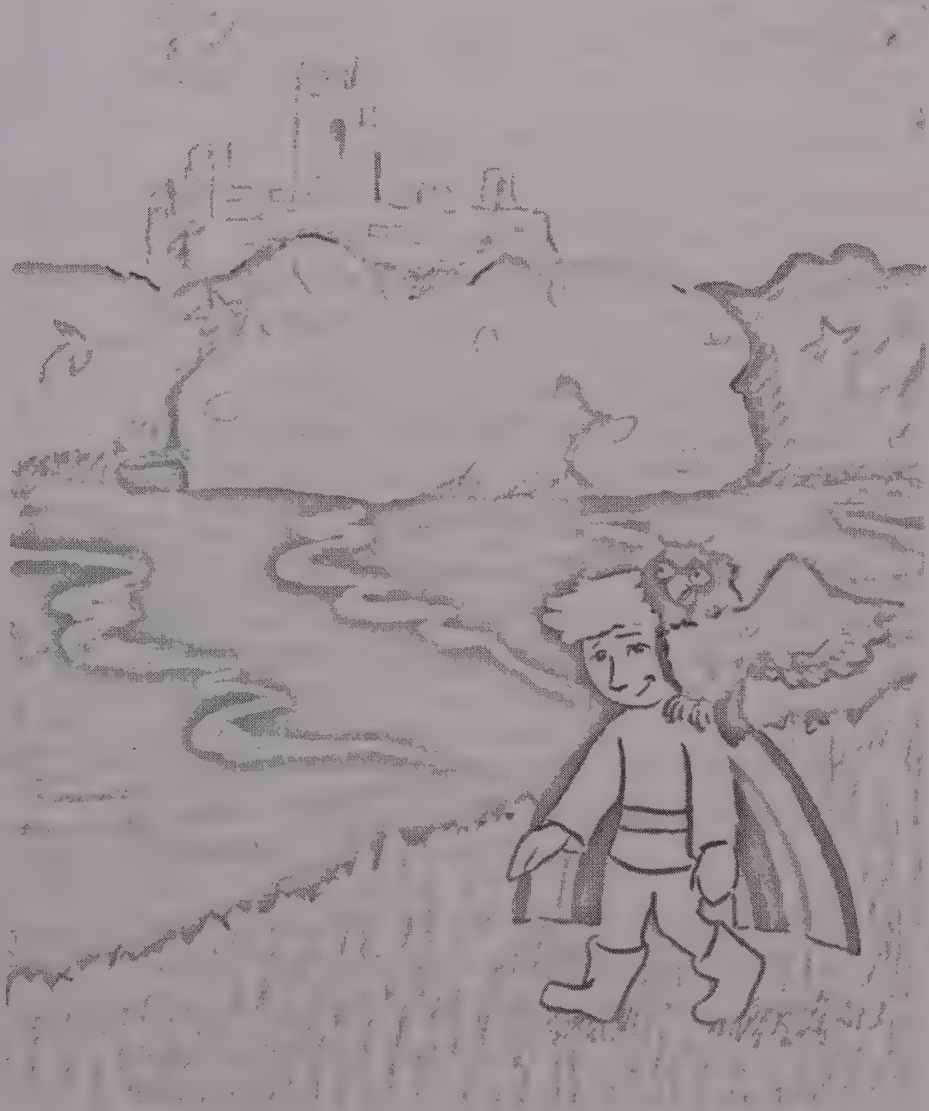
Archie continued to dig.

"How come you don't have an Australian accent?" The rainbow looked at the confused owl.

"I met a Koala once before. He had a thick Australian accent." The rainbow attempted to mimic the Koala's accent, "*G'day mate! Put another shrimp on the barbie.*"

"I'm not sure, Archie. I've never really thought about it."

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"Australian Masked Owl," Archie repeated.
"You don't wear a mask either! Or do you?"

"No. I don't wear a mask."

"So why are you called an Australian Masked Owl?"

Oz was getting a little annoyed with the line of enquiry. He flew off Archie's shoulder and landed up ahead on a large boulder beside a great old tree. The owl was annoyed. He shouted back to Archie.

"I don't know, Archie. I'm kind of like you. I've been on my own all my life. I just read a book about owls one-day and saw a picture of myself in it. I think the mask has to do with the two different colors on my face. Maybe I'm originally from Australia, but I'm from the Riverlands now. This is my home since I can remember."

"Oh, okay. That sounds interesting," said Archie, nodding his head in agreement, hoping this would calm the owl down.

It had been a beautiful start to the day. The sun had been shining brightly all along the roadway to the river path. Archie continued to nod in agreement as he thought, 'the Riverlands really do have the most wonderful scenery.'

"I'd love to know more about where I came from, Oz."

Oz was just about to tell the little rainbow how they had become friends and about his upbringing when suddenly a gust of wind caught Oz's tail. The gust whooshed him up above Archie's head. The owl looked over his shoulder and immediately became concerned with the large black clouds that were fast approaching.

"I think we should seek shelter," Oz said, pointing to the dark, menacing clouds in the distance.

Archie scoffed.

"Take shelter! From what? It's a lovely day, Oz!" the little rainbow replied.

Oz squinted his giant big eyes and became worried.

"We need to get in behind those rocks, take shelter behind the big boulders. Get some cover. Hold onto that tree."

The owl pointed to the largest tree beside them. It looked sturdy enough to withstand anything, even the worst storm.

"I'm a very clever rainbow, Oz. If anyone were to know that the weather was to change,

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it'd be me who'd know, not you," he said dismissively.

"I'm very worried, Archie," Oz flew around Archie's head in panicked circles.

"You're always worried, Oz," the rainbow laughed. "You're a worry-wart."

Just then a large black shadow darkened the path around them. The wind began to grow stronger. Archie wiped a raindrop from his head and looked at the droplet. He looked up and realized they were about to get caught in a very big storm. The wind picked up ferociously, the beautiful landscape turned dark with shadows. The rain lashed down as Oz cried for help.

"The wind is taking me, Archie! It's taking me away!"

Archie looked up at his best friend being whipped away by the howling wind, up into the sky.

"Save yourself, Archie! Grab onto the big tree! Hold on tight! Hold on as tight as you possibly can! I love you, buddy."

Archie ran to the tree beside the boulders, just as the wise old owl had advised him. He grabbed on with all his might.

“Oz, don’t leave me, Oz. I’m holding on, just like you said. I’m sorry, Oz, I should have listened to you.”

Archie watched with fear as Oz was taken up into the big dark clouds by the wind. The owl faded from the rainbow’s sight. The rain lashed down on the river. The trees were bent over. The darkness scared the little rainbow.

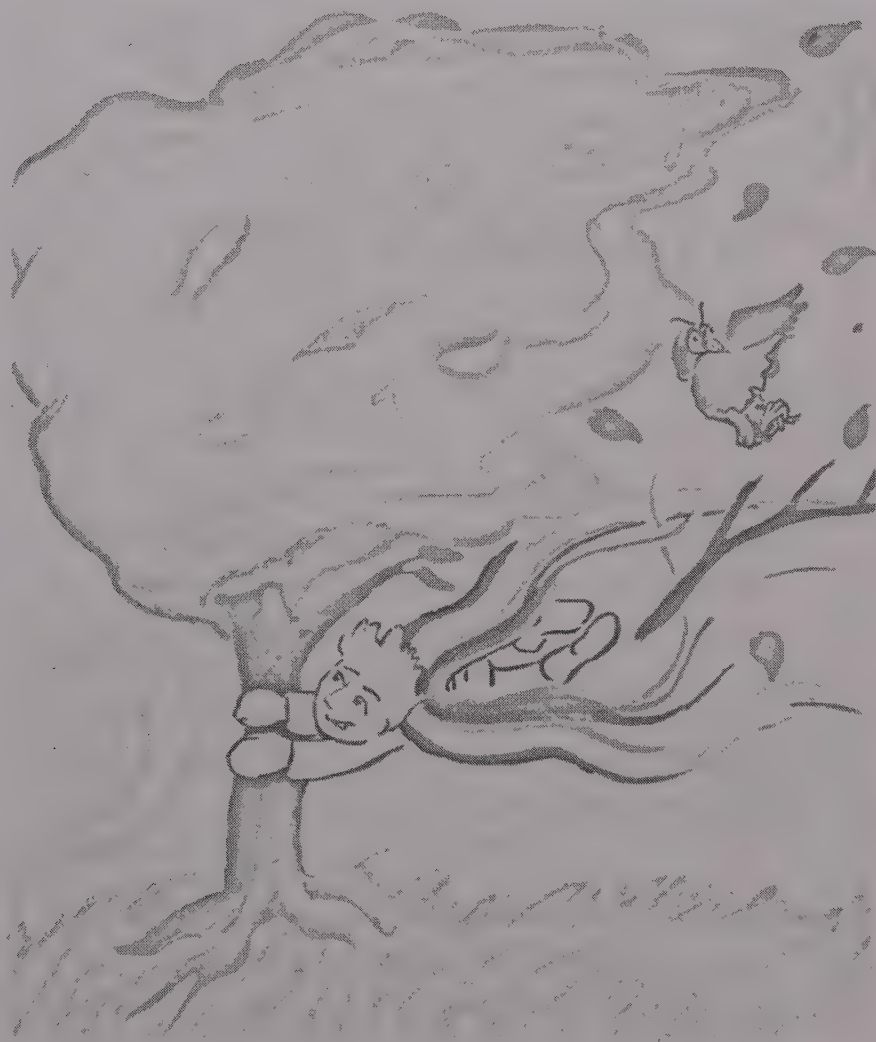
All Archie could do now was hold onto the tree as hard as Oz had told him. As hard as he possibly could. The wind battered the little rainbow. His poor little arms got sore from holding on. The wind used all its power to pry him from the tree. He used all his might to just keep holding on.

“I must do what Oz told me to do. Hold on tight. Hold on tight. Hold on tight,” he squeezed his eyes closed and gritted his teeth.

The wind tore through the little rainbow. It swept him off his feet. Archie fluttered in the wind like a flag. He held on, just as Oz told him to. He held on tight, as the wind blew through him like he was a ragdoll. Just when Archie thought he couldn’t hold on anymore, when the pain in his arms had reached an unbearable level, the black clouds began to

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move on. They went as quick as they came. The rainbow breathed a sigh of relief.



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2

After the Storm

After the rain eased, the wind died down. The color had come back into the world as the sun shone again. Archie was slumped on the ground, exhausted. He opened his eyes slowly and shook his head to wake himself up. He looked around and noticed that the world was even brighter than before. The rain had made the forest and surroundings glitter like gold. Archie sat for a moment, thinking.

He turned and hugged the base of the tree. The great tree which had saved him from being blown away. He looked around as the storm passed, looking for his best friend. He wiped a leaf from his face and stood up. He cleaned himself down, wiping his hands and

arms. He fixed himself and walked to the river's edge.

It was Oz's favorite place. Just where the river opened into the lake. It was as nice a day now as when the day had started. But Archie was getting upset. He couldn't find his owl friend. He panned the sky repeatedly. He couldn't see Oz anywhere.

Archie had no intention of giving up. He walked along the riverbank some more, on towards the lakeside, looking in every bush and behind every tree that he passed. He was becoming very disheartened. He gazed up at the sky. He thought he spotted something up there. He thought he saw something flying around. He shook his head.

Archie kept searching. He wondered if he had ever been separated from Oz for this length of time. He fought hard to hold back the tears as he searched for the cranky little old owl. He put one hand to his forehead, trying to shade the glare of the sun. He looked up again. He thought he saw a speck in the sky. 'Is that Oz?' he wondered to himself.

The little speck grew larger. Large enough to make out the color. It was his purple feathered friend. Oz fell from the sky like a ton

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of bricks. Not very gracefully at all. Falling straight towards the little rainbow.



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Oz prided himself on being a wonderful acrobat of the sky. A large bush, not far from Archie, broke his fall. Leaves and dust bellowed from the crash zone. Not graceful at all.

Oz was a little bit worse for wear. But it wasn't the first storm he had endured in his life and it wouldn't be his last. He slowly pulled himself out of the bush. He dusted himself off and scanned the riverbank and the lakeshore, looking for his colorful friend.

Archie rushed up, screaming.

"Oz! I see you! I can see you!" A tear rolled down Archie's face as he spotted his best buddy.

"I'm here, can you see me?" he waved both hands high above his head.

Oz struggled to see Archie from the ground. He flew up into the air a little.

"Where is he? I have the best vision of any bird in the world. Surely, I should be able to spot my multi-colored friend. Oh, I hope he's all right."

Archie waved his arms. He screamed at the top of his voice as he got closer to his friend.

"Oz! Over here, Oz! Over here!"

Oz could hear him with his superb hearing, but he couldn't see Archie anywhere.

He followed the sound and homed in on his buddy. He got so close to Archie before he saw him that he almost bumped into him.

"Oz, are you all right?" Archie asked.

"Oh! Archie! I didn't see you. You've changed. What happened to you?"

"I nearly got blown away, but I did what you said. I hung onto the tree with all my might," Archie smiled.

Oz shook his head one hundred and thirty-five degrees to his right and one hundred and thirty-five degrees to his left.

"No, no. I mean, that's great, but what happened to you? Your colors?"

Archie was confused with the question. "What about my colors?" he asked.

"Your seven colors. They are all grey," he told the worried little rainbow.

"What are you on about? I'm a rainbow. I'm the most colorful thing on this planet. I'm made of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet!" Archie was getting annoyed with Oz now.

"Sorry to tell you this, Archie. But you're all grey!" Oz said sadly.

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The rainbow frowned.

"What are talking about? I'm just a bit windswept after the storm. My colors are there, I just can't see them. Must be something wrong with my vision."

"It's not your vision, buddy."

Archie slumped to the ground. "So, you're saying my red color is grey?"

"Yes, it's light grey," Oz said as he shook his head again. "What about orange?" asked the perplexed little rainbow.

It's dark grey," Oz nodded.

"Ammm, and yellow?"

"It's medium grey," Oz said as he covered his eyes with his wings in dismay. Archie kept going through his colors.

"And my green color?"

"It's nearly black," said Oz, wishing the interrogation would stop.

"Oh no." Archie was feeling so sad now. "What about blue?"

"It's kind of a dark light grey," he said, trying to come up with different types of grey.

"And indigo?" the little rainbow asked, wishing that he had just one single color left.

Oz apologized for his answer.

"Sorry, but it's dark grey."

Archie asked about his seventh and last color.

"What about violet?"

"Oh, that's still violet," Oz said flippantly.

"Really?" asked Archie.

"No. It's medium grey too."

"That's a bit mean. So, you're saying I'm just basically grey?"

Oz nodded. "I'm sorry Archie. I was just trying to lighten the mood. You're a greyscale rainbow."

The owl pointed to the water's edge.

"Look into the lake. It's flat calm, you'll be able to see for yourself."

Archie walked over to the lake and stared into it. The lake was so flat and calm now, it looked like a mirror. The little rainbow looked down and saw that he was just different shades of gray. He nearly cried, but he was still in a state of disbelief. Oz tried to comfort him.

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He sat on Archie's shoulder and told him that it was going to be all okay.

"I think the lake is broken. I don't think the lake is reflecting my colors properly," Archie said, tears welling in his eyes as he looked up at Oz.

Oz assured Archie that the lake wasn't broken.

"Look at me, Archie, what color am I?"

"You're purple," Archie said.

"Look into the lake and tell me what color I am."

Archie looked away from Oz and faced the mirror lake.

"You're purple!" he said, beginning to cry, as the realization of the situation hit him.

Oz comforted Archie with a wing around his shoulder.

"It must have been the storm that blew away all your colors."

The owl flew onto Archie's other shoulder.

"Don't cry, Archie, I'll help you. We will find your colors together. Please don't cry, Archie. Let's go look for your colors. We'll find them, I promise."

Archie looked back up at Oz. He paused, with the saddest face Oz had ever seen.

Oz reassured him, "It'll be an adventure. I promise."

Archie smiled. "You promise?" he asked, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Yes," said Oz as he flew around Archie with excitement. "I promise!" he shouted. "Now let's go on our adventure. Let's find those colors!"

Archie smiled and laughed as the two of them started off down the river pathway together, excited to be on their new adventure.

3

The Beginning of the New Adventure

Archie and Oz continued to walk along the lakeshore, heading to where the fast-flowing river branched off. They followed along the riverbank. Archie didn't really know where they were going.

"Why are we going this way, Oz?" the little rainbow asked.

The wise old owl loved a good question.

"Well, the stormy winds were blowing south towards this river. So, if the wind blew your colors away, then they should be somewhere in this direction."

Archie was suitably impressed.

"You really are the cleverest owl I've ever met."

Oz, prone to becoming grumpy very quickly, was annoyed with Archie's response.

"The cleverest owl you've ever met! But you've only ever met one owl. Am I not the cleverest animal in the land?"

"Amm...but I haven't met every animal in the land. So, I can't say that you're the cleverest animal in the land."

Oz swooped down in front of Archie and stopped.

"That's fair enough, but am I the cleverest animal that you've ever met so far?"

Archie shook his head. "What do you mean?"

"What do you mean? What do you mean? Am I the cleverest animal you've ever met? It's a simple question."

Archie wasn't paying attention to Oz.

"What are you saying, Oz?"

Oz thought that Archie had now lost his hearing also, so he tried for the third time.

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"Am I..."

"Shush," the rainbow said, holding his index finger up to Oz.

"What? How dare you talk to me like that!" said the angry owl.

"Oz, I thought I heard something. Just be quiet for a second. Please. You're rabbiting on a bit," Archie said as listened for where the sound was coming from.

Oz frowned but remained silent. The two of them stood, listening intently. All they could hear was the rushing of the river beside them and the crashing of a waterfall up ahead. The surrounding trees didn't make a sound in the calm wind. Archie looked at Oz.

"Do you hear that?"

"Hear what?" Oz asked.

Archie nodded his head, "I can hear something."

Oz closed his eyes and concentrated on all the sounds around him.

"All right. Give me a moment. I'll use my supersonic hearing," the owl said.

Oz used all his might, all his concentration and all his will. He listened and

listened. Suddenly the owl's eyes popped open and he flew into the air like a rocket.

"Archie, someone is in trouble! I can hear them. They are shouting for help. Come with me!"

Oz flew on along the riverbank. Archie ran as fast as he could behind him.

"Come on, Archie, we need to move fast," Oz said as he swooped over the raging river. "The river is so fast and powerful after the storm. All the rainwater from the lake is flooding down towards the waterfall."

Archie panted as he ran. He leaped into the air and glided for a bit with the use of his arches.

"Can you see anything up ahead? Will we make it in time?"

Oz shouted back.

"I see an animal in trouble in the rushing water. We must hurry. They are really close to the waterfall edge. They are holding on. You need to help them, Archie!"

"I'm running as fast as I can, Oz, I promise. I'm gliding a bit too." The little rainbow's legs could hardly be seen, they were moving so fast.

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"I know you are, Archie. You're such a fast little rainbow. We're nearly here."

Archie ran and ran with all his might, as quick as he could. They soon arrived at the edge of the waterfall, where a large red deer was clinging onto a protruding branch.

"Help me, please help me. I'm going to go over the waterfall. I'll never make it," cried the terrified deer.

Archie arrived at the scene. "You'll be ok now, I promise. We'll get you out. Just hold on a little bit longer."

"Please help me. Please!" said the distraught deer.

Archie looked around for something to rescue the deer with.

"Oz, we need some sort of a rope of something, to throw out to the deer so we can pull him back in."

Oz nodded, "I'll fly upwards and look for something that will work." The old owl flew up into the air and used his exceptional vision to look for something. He focused on the forest and the riverbank. He swooped high and low. He zoomed in on what he thought was something suitable.

'The tree vines, this will do.'

"Archie, over here! This is perfect. It is just like a length of rope!" he shouted as he flew down to the tree vine.

Archie ran over and began pulling the tree vine off the tree. He struggled. The vines were stuck fast. Oz helped him by pecking at the vine's anchor points. Archie gave one massive pull and the whole tree vine came off. Oz pecked, bit, and chewed with his sharp beak until the vine was cleanly separated.

"Let's go, Oz. We must save the deer," the little rainbow said, running back to the struggling deer.

"I'm so tired," said the deer. "I can't hold on any longer."

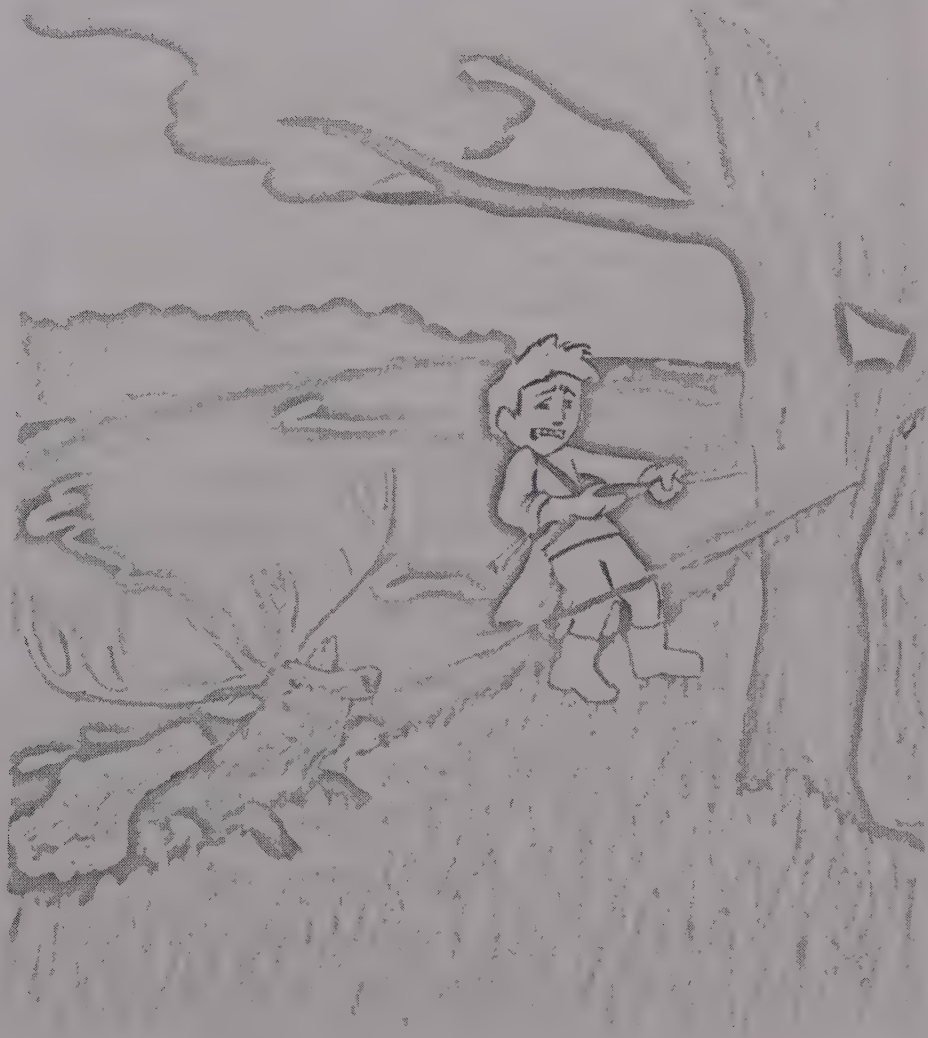
Archie ran as fast as he could.

"Just hold on for a moment longer. You can do it!" he said as he flung the tree vine out to the deer. "Grab onto it. We'll save you."

The great big red deer caught the vine with its teeth on the very first attempt.

"Great throw!" said Oz, trying his best to encourage his little friend.

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Archie started to pull hard on the vine. The deer gripped on tight with his teeth, but he couldn't pull himself away from the tree branch.

"Oz, I'm too small to pull this big deer onto the riverbank on my own," Archie said, his eyes welling up.

"No, Archie, you need to wrap the vine around a tree. And then pull towards the deer. If you and the deer work together, you can do it!" Oz shouted.

The rushing water made it hard to hear.

"Tie the vine around your waist!" Oz commanded the rainbow, to which he duly obeyed. Oz flew up between the large deer and the spot where Archie stood.

"All right. On my command, when I say 'pull' you pull with all your might, Archie, and you, my deer, run towards the little rainbow." Archie was nervous and so was the deer.

"Give me a second, Oz!"

The rainbow double-checked the vine around his waist, while the deer clenched it with all its power. Archie nodded to the deer; the deer nodded back.

"We're ready!" Archie shouted.

"Okay. PULL!" Oz roared. The deer let go of the branch and ran towards the riverbank. Archie pulled the vine with all his strength, as the river rushed under the feet of the scampering deer. They both paused for a moment. The deer felt the water was winning the battle. Archie held the vine tight around the tree. He took a deep breath.

"One more time, together now. PULL!" shouted Oz.

The two of them made one more attempt. Archie pulled the vine while the deer made one more run towards the riverbank. Archie pulled with all his might, his face grimacing with grit and determination. The little rainbow gasped as he fell face first into the dirt; the vine had come loose.

Oz flew down to his little buddy, "Are you all right, my friend?"

Archie was dazed and confused.

"What about the *deer*? Is the deer all right? The vine slipped."

The deer knelt down beside Archie and licked his face. The weary deer looked Archie in his eyes.

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"I'm fine, little rainbow. You saved my life. I am forever in your debt."

Oz smiled and laughed, "You saved the big deer. You did it, little rainbow. You did it. You're the best. Woohooooo."

Archie was slightly embarrassed by his best friend's antics.

"Are you all right?"

The deer pushed its nose underneath Archie and helped him up.

"I'm fine. Thanks so much. I'm just a bit exhausted. But I'll be fine in a few minutes. The storm caused the bank to burst, just where I was grazing. The flash flood swept me off my feet and into the river. Luckily, you and your owl friend heard my cries for help."

"Oz and I are so glad you're ok. I'm sure you'd do the same for me if I needed help," said the rainbow.

The humble deer addressed his two new friends.

"Oz, Archie, if there is anything I can do to repay you, either of you. Please let me know."

Oz sat on the back of the deer. "I doubt there is anything that you can do for us. We

appreciate the offer, though. We're glad you're safe, but we're going to keep going on our adventure."

The deer perked up at the word 'adventure'.

"What adventure are you guys going on?"

Oz explained, "Archie here, has just lost all his colors in that big storm that blew through a while ago."

The deer looked at Oz and then at Archie, he looked at Oz again and then back to Archie. He looked down at the ground and looked back up at the two best buddies.

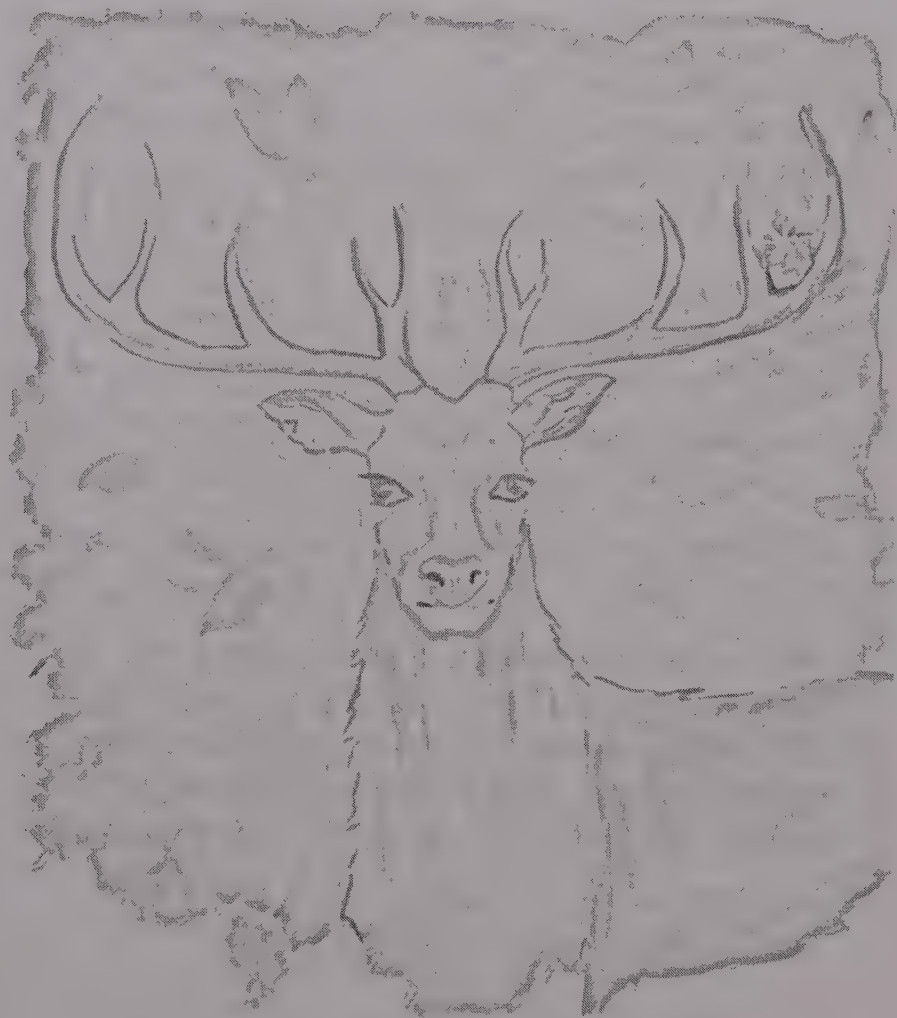
"Phew, I actually thought I was losing the vision out of my left eye. I thought I was going colorblind. I'm seeing Archie here in greyscale and Oz here is bright purple."

Archie began to walk on; he was getting upset again.

"Archie!" cried the deer. "Do you know who I am?"

Archie stopped and looked around. "No. I don't know who you are," he sniffled. "You're a deer. There are many deer. I don't know you."

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"I'm the mythical, mystical Great Red Deer from The Emerald Isle. I'm very powerful, you know!" the antlered beast said.

"You're from The Emerald Isle? Why aren't you green, so?" the rainbow took a peevish tone. He didn't mean to snap at the deer, he was just a bit upset and tired. The deer stood tall.

"I'm a Great Red Deer. Red is my color. I'm the keeper of this color. It's my power."

Archie stopped. He turned around and looked at the Great Red Deer.

"Can you help me?" the little rainbow's lower lip started to quiver.

I can, just as I promised. Whatever I can do for you, I will," the deer said, as he leaned down to Archie, pointing his antler at him. The little rainbow spotted a small ruby, luminescing right at the tip of one of his antlers, shining bright red.

"Take it, Archie," said the mystical deer.

Archie picked the ruby from the antler. He gazed at it in delight as it suddenly lit up the whole area around them. It put a smile on Archie's face. A red glow beamed across the land.

"Take the stone, Archie. Keep it with you. It'll absorb into you and you'll have your red color back."

Archie looked at the stone and put it in his pocket. He thanked the Great Red Deer. Archie ran to a puddle and looked into it, just as a bright red stripe spread across him.

"I've got one of my colors back, Oz! The little grey and red rainbow shouted in delight to his best buddy.

"I've got my color red back. I'm sooooo happy."

Oz was just as happy. "You deserve it, Archie. You really deserve it."

The Great Red Deer nodded to them both. "I thank you for what you have done. You both saved me. I shall return to my herd now and tell them of the great little rainbow and his flappy friend."

"Flappy!" said Oz.

The Great Red Deer turned to leave, then he looked back, "I'll always be with you, Archie."

He walked a few steps. "You're very special, Archie. Very special."

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Archie stood there, stunned. He watched the Great Red Deer walk off into the distance.

“To-whit, to-whoo,” sang Oz, trying to get the rainbow’s attention.

Archie turned around and followed behind Oz. He didn’t say anything. He was very happy and very sad at the same time. He was proud of what he had done. They walked down the pathway together, a beaming smile on both their faces. The day was getting better. They both felt good. Archie was delighted that he had at least one of his colors back. He couldn’t stand just being grey all the time. The walk was fun, Oz whistled all the way. Archie loved his whistling.

4

The Bend in the River

"Did you ever hear of a 'moonbow'?" asked the little owl.

"A moonbow, no, never heard of one. Are you just making this up?" asked the skeptical little rainbow.

"Well," said the owl. "A moonbow is a lunar rainbow made by the light from a bright moon when it's raining. It's like a night version of a rainbow."

"Really! That's amazing," Archie smiled.

"It's very rare indeed," Oz pointed out.

Archie was quite impressed with Oz's knowledge and was very grateful that he

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empowered him with it. They continued walking until the river started to bend. It began to bend along on itself to the west.

Archie stopped. "This is not good, Oz, we're going to be going back on ourselves in no time."

"I agree, Archie. The wind wasn't blowing west, it was blowing south. If we're going to find your colors, then I think we'll have to cross the river here."

Archie nodded. "I think you're right, but how will we cross here? It's too fast-flowing. Even if we had a raft, we'd be pulled down the river in seconds."

Oz landed on the ground beside Archie. Using his wing, he pensively scratched his chin.

"I'm stumped, Archie. We'll have to wait until the river calms down a bit."

Archie sat at the river's edge. Oz sat beside him. They looked into the distance, appreciating the beautiful trees and the lovely day that surrounded them. Archie lay back on the grass and relaxed for a minute. Oz lay in beside him. After a few moments of silence between the both of them, Oz shot up from his resting place and flew upwards into the sky.

"Archie, get up! There is something moving in the water," the owl said worriedly.

Archie jumped up from his resting position and stood to attention. He looked into the river but couldn't see anything.

"What is it?" Oz pointed to two small round balls in the river. Archie looked confused, "What are they?"

Oz was scared. "I don't know, but they look strange."

Just then the two round balls blinked and arose from the river. They were attached to a large green scaly alligator. It rose and rose from the river, the two little buddies wondered how much more of the massive alligator was still under water.

A voice came from the alligator, a deep threatening voice.

"Hello, my little friends." Archie was frozen to the spot with the sound of the sinister voice.

"What brings you two here?"

Archie shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"We're on an adventure. But we came to the bend in the river and can't cross it."

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"You want to get across the river?"

"Yes, but it's just too fast for me. I'm a bit scared of it."

"Yes, yes. Too fast for you. You're not cut out for this type of fast flowing river."

"I sure am not," replied Archie.

"Oh, that's no bother to me. I can put you on my back and give you a lift across the river. It's easy for me. I'm probably the greatest swimmer of all these rivers. I'm a freshwater alligator. I love this type of water."

Oz was a bit worried.

"Yeah, but no! We're fine for a lift across the river. We'll just wait and let the river recede a bit."

The alligator turned quickly towards the owl, a look of disdain on the reptile's face.

"This part of the river is always this wild. It won't calm down." The alligator was about to leave. "But it's up to you. I'm here to help if you need me."

Archie was desperate to get across that river.

"No, please don't go Mr. Alligator. Can you give me a lift across?"

Oz interjected.

"Hang on a second, Archie. Can myself and the silly little rainbow have a word in private, please, Mr. Alligator?" To which the alligator nodded in agreement.

Archie and Oz went behind a tree. Oz didn't think it was a good idea to get on the back of the alligator and cross the river.

"Archie, are you crazy? You're going to get onto the back of an alligator that you have only just met, and let him bring you across the river?"

Archie agreed with everything Oz said.

"Yes. I know what you're saying, Oz, but I have no reason not to trust him. He seems nice. He wants to help."

"He wants to snap you up with his big sharp teeth, that's what he wants to do," Oz said, shaking his head.

"He won't do that to me. I trust him." Archie said faithfully.

"Well, I'm flying over the river. He won't be snapping me up and making dinner out of me. You're on your own here, Archie. But don't come back complaining to me when you're snapped up and in the alligator's belly!"

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Archie ignored his best friend's warnings.

"I won't, Oz. I won't blame you," he said as he went back to the big green alligator.

"Do you want me to give you a lift across?" asked the alligator.

"Yes please," said a grateful Archie.

"All right, just hop onto my back and I'll bring you across the river now."

The alligator docked beside the bank of the river and Archie jumped onto his back. Oz flew up into the air. He couldn't bear to think what was going to happen to his best friend. The alligator began to bring the little rainbow

across the river. The alligator paddled across with ease. The rushing river was no match for his power.



A few moments later, they were halfway across the river. The alligator suddenly stopped and spoke to his newfound friend. He turned his neck right around to the helpless rainbow. Oz closed his eyes, fearing the worst. Archie watched as the alligator opened his big snappy mouth as wide as possible. Archie felt weak as he stared down the alligator's throat, with its tonsils dangling before him. Next stop, belly! Archie thought to himself. He was also thinking that this is probably the second time he should have listened to his best buddy.

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The alligator brought his big snappy mouth right up to Archie.

"You're a rainbow. Yes?"

"Yes," Archie's quivering voice replied.

"A funny little rainbow, aren't you?" he asked in his scary deep voice, his breath making Archie feel faint.

"You're a brave little rainbow, getting on my back. Or are you a silly little rainbow for trusting me?"

"I hope I'm not a silly little rainbow," Archie replied, sadness in his eyes.

The alligator opened his snappy mouth, ready to pounce. Ready to snap him up. Oz flew up in a twirl, desperate for his little buddy to do something. Anything. Jump into the raging river, anything would be better than getting snapped up like this.

Archie closed his eyes, fearing the worst. The darkness in his eyes and head made the alligator's snappy teeth sound sharper.

Snap

The alligator spoke.

"No. Actually, you're not a silly little rainbow. I'm really happy that you chose to trust me."

Archie wiped the sweat from his forehead and breathed a sigh of relief. Oz was watching and listening from above. The alligator swished his tail and powered through the water to the other side of the river.

"What?" asked Archie.

"I'm so happy. No one ever trusts me. Everyone judges me; apparently my reputation precedes me."

Archie smiled. "Phew! I just thought you were a nice alligator. I didn't think you were going to do anything bad to me."

"Ha!" Oz shouted sarcastically. "Even when the crocodile practically had your head in his snappy teeth?"

Archie agreed sheepishly, "Yeah. I did. I never doubted my green, friendly-faced crocodile."

"I'm an alligator," shouted the alligator angrily. "I'm not a crocodile."

Oz and Archie looked at each other with caution.

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

"I'm not across the river yet!" the rainbow thought to himself.

"What's the difference?" enquired Archie, always ready to learn.

"There are many differences. Our noses are different, our bodies are wider, we have different shaped teeth. But mainly, alligators don't survive so well in salty sea water, that's why we live in freshwater."

"Oh, ok. I never knew that," said Archie.

"I did," retorted the wise old owl.

The alligator arrived at the other side of the river. The little rainbow thanked him for bringing him across unscathed.

"You know a lot of differences between crocodiles and alligators now, but what's the difference between you, Archie, and normal rainbows?"

Archie didn't like the question, it upset him. "I am a normal rainbow."

Oz swooped down to confront his friend. "You are a normal rainbow, Archie." He perched himself on the shoulder of his once colorful friend. "I think he means, why don't you have all your colors like other rainbows."

"I'm sorry, Archie. I didn't mean to be rude. Like your feathered friend said, I'm just wondering where your colors have gone."

"They got blown away in the storm. The wind took them," said the sad little fellow.

"But you have a red color. You're not fully grey. How is that?"

Oz spoke up. "Archie was a real hero. He helped a great big red deer. He helped it out of the flood waters. The deer was sure to have gone over the waterfall, at the last split in the river, if Archie hadn't come to the rescue."

"Is this true, Archie? You saved a Great Red Deer?"

"Yes. It was in need. It's in my nature to help."

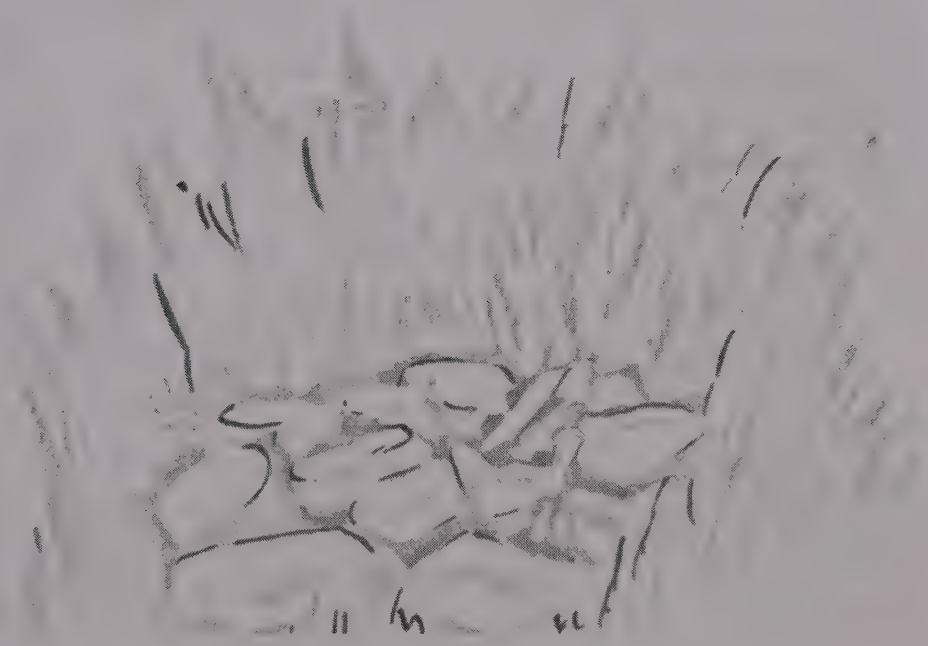
"You really are a great lad. You helped the Great Red Deer and you trusted me to take you across the river," the alligator shook his head in disbelief. "I have a surprise for you, my newfound friend."

Oz smiled. "What is the surprise?"

Archie smiled too. "What's the surprise, Mr. Alligator?"

"Past those bushes over there are a bunch of warm stones."

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I used them every morning to heat myself up. They are so cozy and warm every day. They are a permanent source of heat for me.”

The alligator came out of the water and walked across the grass to the bush clearing.

“There they are. The green stones are so powerful.”

Archie ran past the alligator, knocking Oz into a spin. “What will the green stones do? Tell me, tell me.”

“Lay on them, Archie. Absorb the power. You need it more than I do. You’re the one who brings color to the world.”

Archie looked at the mesmerizing green luminescent stones. He lay on them and felt the heat and power. A few moments later his green color came back. “Oz, Oz, look at me! I’m coming back to my old self. I’ve got my green and red color back!”

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Oz smiled. He was delighted for his little friend. He flew down and hugged him.

Snap, snap, the green alligator's snappy teeth sounded. "Trust in yourself, Archie, just like you trusted in me. Don't let anyone judge you and don't judge anyone. You're a good kid, you'll go far. The sky's the limit."

Oz laughed. "The sky's the limit! Ha! How long were you waiting to say that one, crocodile?"

The alligator snapped his teeth at the owl, causing him to scream in fear.

"It's Mr. Alligator to you."

Archie was worried, until the alligator smiled.

"I'm just joking with you guys," the alligator said as he slid into the river.

"Bye, Mr. Alligator," said the grateful rainbow.

"So long Archie."

"Yeah. See you later, alligator," said Oz.

The alligator swam away. All that could be seen was his two eyes above the water and a swish of the water from his tail.

"I said see you later, alligator!" Oz repeated to the reptile. "See you later, alligator. You're supposed to respond with in a while, crocodile."

"Okay, I think he's gone, Oz."

"Fair enough. I guess he didn't hear me."

The two buddies walked alone by the split in the river, heading along the south riverbank again. The rain was drying up fast, the sun was high in the sky. It had turned into a fabulous, beautiful day. The two walked in silence, both pondering the events of the day. The lovely morning turned into the horrendous storm. Rescuing the Great Red Deer. Meeting the alligator and Archie getting some of his color back.

5

Something in the Bushes

The two adventurers were following the path as usual. It was peaceful and quiet when suddenly Oz sped up high into the sky.

“Archie, I think I’ve seen something.”

“What is it, Oz?”

“I saw a shiny glint in the bush,” whispered the owl as he landed on his friends’ shoulder. They both froze. Silent.

Archie whispered. “I see diamonds. Glinting in the sun. Two of them.”

“That’s what I see, too,” whispered the owl.

The two diamonds blinked. Archie jumped back, causing Oz to be startled into the air.

"Did you see that?" asked Archie.

A whimper was heard by the two brave adventurers.

"There is something in there," said Oz.

"Hey. Who's in there?" asked Archie as he leaned in towards the moving bush. They heard another whimper.

"Stay back, Archie, it could be a dangerous animal or something. Be careful."

"It's fine. I think it's injured or in trouble or something," said Archie caringly. "Hey little buddy, come out and tell us what's wrong. We'll help you out."

"Just ignore him, Archie."

"I'm not going to leave him here and forget about him. What if he's injured?" The rainbow shook his head in dismay.

"No. I don't mean leave him for good." Oz lowered his voice to a whisper. "Just start walking away and ignore him, he might come out then."

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Archie smiled and nodded his head. He spoke loudly.

“Ok, Oz, let’s just go on our way and continue on our adventure.” Archie looked at Oz and followed the trail at the edge of the river.

Oz answered exaggeratedly. “Sounds good, Archie. Let’s be on our way.”

The two followed along the trail again, the river beside them, flowing steadily and the sun beating down.

They noticed a little bustle coming from a bush; they ignored it as best they could.

“Such a lovely day now, Oz.”

“Such a lovely day, Archie.”

“It has been such an adventure today. I wonder what could be next on our adventure,” Archie said as he looked behind him suddenly. Just then he spied a small little furry face with diamond white eyes hiding behind a large tree trunk.

“He’s definitely following us, Oz,” whispered the little rainbow.

Oz whispered, "Keep walking and talking, Archie. I have a plan."

Archie continued along the path chatting to himself. "Meeting that big red deer was so amazing, such a mythical mysterious animal."

Oz flew back to the large tree trunk and hid on the opposite side of the creature. He waited for a few moments, listening to Archie as his voice disappeared into the distance. Then, the little creature poked his head out again. A tiny wolf cub. Oz was motionless as he watched the little white cub make its way out from behind the tree trunk. It scampered along the edge of the river trail. Oz followed silently as the wolf cub caught up with the grey, red and green rainbow. They were within a stone's throw of each other.

Oz shouted to his friend. "Archie, wait for me."

The little cub froze as Archie turned around to him. "Don't be afraid, little one. We mean you no harm. Are you lost? Are you injured?"

The wolf cub was startled. His face turned sad as a tear rolled down his eye. Oz landed beside his buddy.

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"Are you lost, little friend? You seem very young. There, there, don't cry. We'll help you," he comforted the cub.

Archie kneeled in front of the cub.

"Why don't you tell us what's the matter with you? Maybe we can help you. What's your name?"

The cub spoke in a sad, broken voice.

"My name is Ice White Cub. I've lost my mommy. The storm took her away." He began to sob.

Archie instinctively gave the little Ice White Cub a hug. "My name is Archie and I lost my best friend Oz today."

"Hi, I'm Oz," the owl acknowledged.

"I was so worried, I was crying too, just like you," said the rainbow as he sat with the sad little cub. "It's ok to cry, you know."

"It's not the only thing Archie lost today. He lost all his colors too."

"Well, I got two back. We're on an adventure, trying to find the remaining colors."

The Ice White Cub looked at Archie and Oz, he became sad again. "I just want my mommy. I want my mommy," he cried.

Oz flew to the cub's ear and whispered, "Don't cry, little friend, we'll help you find your mommy. We won't stop until we do. Why don't you come with us?"

"But what about your colors? Don't you want to find them?" asked the sad little cub.

Oz spun up into the air. "We're following the wind's direction from the storm. Maybe your mother was pushed down by the wind too. We're going that way, why don't you come with us? I'm sure we'll find your mother."

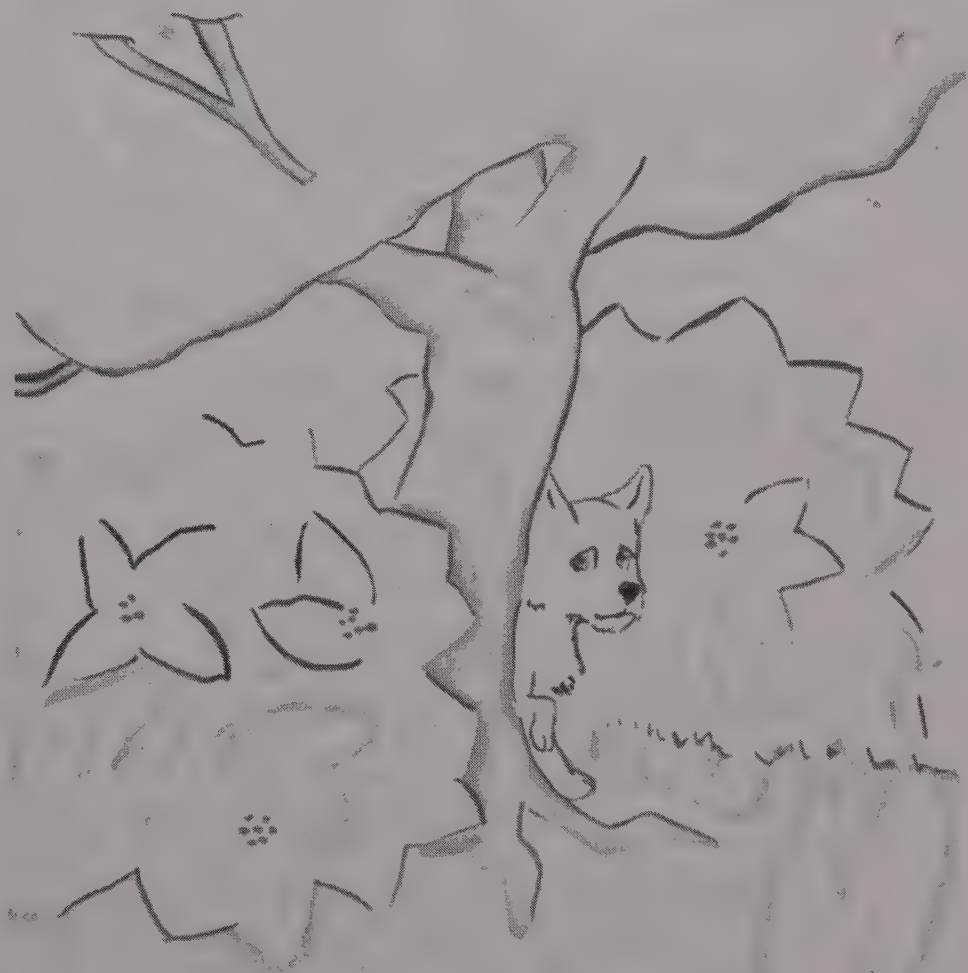
"Finding your mother is a lot more important than finding my colors. My colors are just that, only colors. We really want to help you, little cub," Archie pleaded with the cub.

"You really think you can help me? I'm so sad without my mommy."

"You bet, yeah," said Oz as they set off on their adventure.

The three of them followed along the river walkway, continuing in the direction of the morning's storm.

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors



Justin Conboy

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

"Wait until I tell you what happened to us today," Archie said to the cub.

The little rainbow filled the wolf cub in on their adventure to date.

"So, after we found each other and then we rescued the Great Red Deer and got a lift from the green crocodile, then we bumped into you."

"Wow, that's some day you guys have had," said the little cub in amazement.

Oz was flying high above them as they chatted. He could spot something in the distance.

"Oh no, you guys. I think we're going to stumble on some bad news."

"What is it, Oz?" asked Archie.

"It's the bridge. I think the bridge is out."

The Ice White Cub seemed confused. "What does that mean?"

"It means the bridge is damaged and can't be crossed," explained Archie.

"Oh no. What if my mommy is on the other side of the bridge? What if all your colors are on the other side of the bridge, Archie? We'll never be returned to the ones we love."

The Ice White Cub looked up at Archie with his diamond white eyes, looking for an explanation or a morsel of support that he could give the lad.

Oz took this one, knowing that Archie was a bit out of his depth dealing with the little wolf cub. He wasn't as wise as the old owl.

"It'll be okay, let's just get to the bridge first and we'll assess the situation then."

The two of them ran ahead to see what Oz had seen from up high. They ran past the bushes, along the river front and past the trees that led to the dark forest, Oz flying as fast as he could to keep with his young friends.

Buzz, buzz, buzz.

"What is that buzzing sound?" asked Oz.

The little rainbow looked back at Oz and stopped running.

"What did you say?" asked Archie.

Buzz. Archie looked right. Buzz. Archie looked left.

They all paused silently, listening, looking for the buzzing sound.

Oz looked at the Ice White Cub. The Ice White Cub looked at Archie. Archie looked at

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Oz. The Ice White Cub then looked at Oz who was now looking at Archie. They could only hear the river flowing beside them.

"I don't hear anything. You're losing your mind, Oz," said the rainbow.

Oz snapped back, in a grumpy tone. "Yes. I probably am losing my mind. I've been hanging around you too long."

Archie began running again. The Ice White Cub followed closely behind. Oz jumped into the air and flapped his wings to catch up with them. Soon they reached the broken wooden bridge.

"Look," said Oz pointing to a fallen tree which was caught in the riverbed.

"The tree must have fallen into the river during the storm." He flew over the broken wooden bridge and landed on one of the remaining handrails on the other side of the river. "There are tree branches here. The tree must have taken the bridge out."

"Taken out?" the cub said to Archie, waiting on an explanation.

"Smashed into it," Archie said. "I think Oz used to be an engineer when he was young. He finds it difficult to say things without over-

complicating them. Don't worry. I'll translate for you."

The little cub smiled, knowing he was lucky to find such good friends.

"What are we going to do? We need to keep going south. How are we going to get across this river now?" asked Archie.

"What about your friend the crocodile?" asked the cub.

"Oh, don't call him a crocodile. He doesn't like that. He's an alligator."

"Oh right, yeah. Sorry, Mr. Alligator," said the cub.

"He's long gone. We have no idea where he is," said Oz from his bridge perch.

The little Ice White Cub began to cry from his diamond white eyes. "I'm never going to find my mommy now. I want my mommy! I want my mommy!"

"Oh no, little wolf cub. We'll find your mother. We promise."

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaagggggggggggghhhh hhhhhhhh," screamed Oz as he shot up into the air. "I think I've found her!" He tumbled through the air uncontrollably.

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Splash, he fell into the water. His head went under, bubbles came out of his mouth as he shouted in silence. He managed to come up for air. "Help! I can't swim!" He splashed around until suddenly he was yanked from the water by the scruff of his neck.

"It's my mommy, The Ice Blue Wolf!" cried the cub.

The Ice Blue Wolf pulled Oz from the water.

"Oh my, oh my! Oh! That was close. Thank you, thank you for saving me, Mrs. Wolf!"

She snarled at Oz viciously, still holding him in her jaws. "You have my son. I want him back. I will not let you go until I have him back safely."

"Mommy! Mommy! He is my friend. They are helping me. They helped me find you. Please don't hurt him, Mommy. He's just a silly old owl."

Oz looked perplexed. The comment seemed out of order, but he didn't think it was the time or the place to argue with the young cub about the insult!

The cub was jumping up and down. "Please, please Mommy! He's a good little owl."

Archie begged for his best friend. "No, Ice Blue Wolf, we are friends of your little cub. We are only trying to help him. Trying to help him find you."

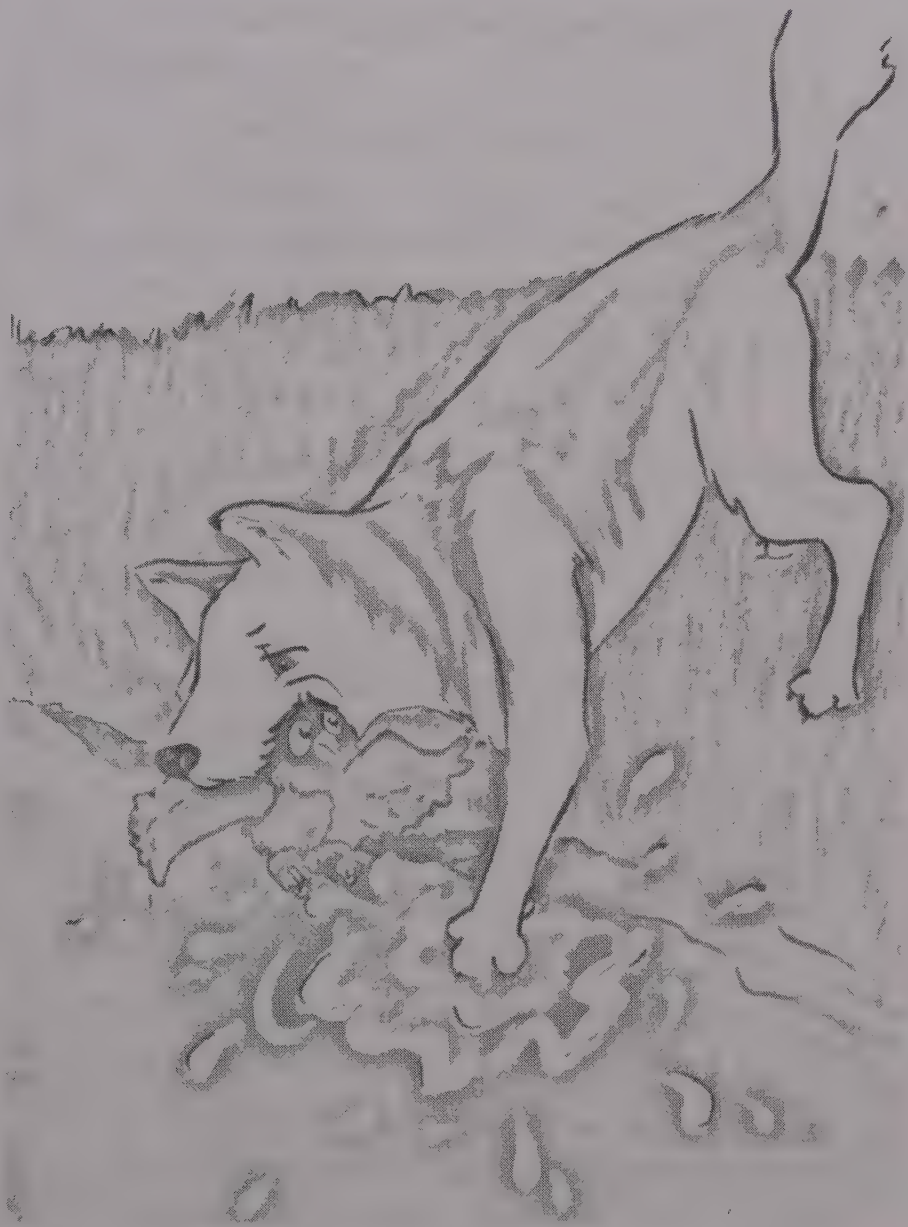
The Ice Blue Wolf looked at her little cub, then looked at the funny-colored rainbow. The owl was still pinned in the wolf's teeth, tight enough to put pressure on him but not tight enough to hurt him. She looked around, thinking of the hurt and pain she had endured throughout the day. The thought of the loss of her little cub began to take its toll. A tear squeezed its way out of her eye. She lowered her head to the ground. She turned and pinned the owl on the grass. She was overwhelmed with emotion as she looked across at her cub; separated by the rushing river.

She relinquished her grasp over the little owl. As soon as Oz was free, he flew up into the air, away from any harm. Oz flew straight over to Archie and hugged his little buddy. Archie hugged his best friend back. The little cub let an almighty cry out. A howl that would wake the dead.

"Oooooooooowwwwwwwww!" the little cub roared.

"Oooooooooowwwwwwwww!" the little cub's mother roared.

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Justin Conboy

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“Oooooooooowwwwwwwww!” shouted the little rainbow.

“Buzz!” said the little bee.

Everyone stopped howling. Archie looked around, wondering where the buzzing noise was coming from. His little face scrunched up as he tried to follow the noise with his eyes.

Buzz

It swooped past him. Archie whipped his head from left to right.

Buzz

It swooped past him again. Archie followed the sound down and around with his eyes, making him a bit dizzy.

Buzz

Then, all of a sudden, the buzzing stopped. Archie’s eyes were crossed as he looked at the little bee on the end of his little nose.

“What’s with all the howling?” the little bee asked.

Archie sighed sadly. “The bridge is out, we can’t reunite our new little friend, Ice White Cub with his mother Ice Blue Wolf.” Archie shook his head, causing the bee to buzz into the

air. "It's what wolves do. They howl when they are sad."

Buzz, buzz.

The bee swirled around the rainbow's head, making little Archie dizzy.

"You're not a wolf, why were you howling?" asked the inquisitive bee.

Oz took on the bee's line of enquiry. "No. He's not a wolf but he was showing sadness for the wolves by sympathizing with them."

"Oh. And who are you?" the bee asked abruptly.

"I'm Oz. I'm Archie's best friend," the owl announced proudly.

"Interesting! Very interesting. And why, pray tell, can you not reunite your friend's friend and your friend's mother?" the nosy bee asked.

"Well," said the owl sarcastically. "Unless your compound eyes haven't noticed, the bridge is out."

Oz chuckled to himself as he looked around for some humorous support. Silence ensued, only to be broken by a slight buzzing sound.

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“Or maybe you don’t understand the meaning of the words the bridge is out?” he said as he paused and looked around again. “Probably a little too much terminology there for you.”

“Why would that be too much terminology for me?” asked the smart little bumble bee.

“The lingo, or words, should I say, are a little bit technical for you. No?” asked the smug owl.

“To-whit, to-whoo, I buzz. The bridge has suffered a structural defect. Has it?”

The little owl smirked. “So, you think you know a bit about construction, do you?”

The bee swooped past him and stopped instantaneously in the air. “I certainly do. Have you ever heard of a hexagonal prismatic cell?”

“Ha!” shouted the owl as he flew up to confront the bee. “Mass hexagonal prismatic cells, otherwise known as honeycomb! Of course, I’ve heard of it.”

The bee swooshed behind the owl, the owl spun round immediately. The two intellectual foes confronted each other.

"You've heard of it, have you?" The bee smirked.

"Yes. I have," said the annoyed owl.

"So maybe you'd know that we, the bees, invented it."

"Oh," scoffed the owl. "Next you'll be telling me you invented honey too."

The clever owl smiled as he looked around. Surly he was going to see his friends smiling back at him as he finally put the bee in his place. Oz looked perplexed as he looked at his friends staring back at him in confusion.

"What?" he wondered.

Archie had seen enough. It was time to bail his friend out.

"Oz, the honeybee does make honey. That's kind of why they are called honeybees. And I'm not sure if they invented the honeycomb shape, but they definitely use it as their house."

"Oooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!" roared the Ice Blue Wolf.

"Oooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!" yelped the Ice White Cub.

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"Okay, okay. We hear you," said the owl angrily. "It's not all about you, Archie, and it's not all about you, wolf cub."

The owl flew up higher into the air. The bee backed off as an increasingly louder buzz began to emanate from the forest. Archie looked around in confusion, listening for the noise again.

"I know what a mass of hexagonal prismatic cells are. Maybe I don't know where honey comes from, but foodstuffs are not my area of expertise."

His yelling became louder as the buzz intensified. "You, Mrs. Bee, were not invited to this little adventure, so maybe you should be on your way, maybe you're not welcome here."

The buzz had become deafening, but Oz didn't notice, he was too angry with the little bee.

"Oz," said Archie softly.

"Not now, Archie. I'm not finished with the little lonely bee."

"Oz. Behind you, Oz," Archie pointed to a large swarm of bees who had gathered behind the owl, unbeknownst to him.

"No, Archie. I must get this off my chest. I've had a rough day too. This bee is making me out to be stupid. I used to be the...."

Oz turned around slowly. He came face to face with a couple of thousand helper bees. His eyes and mouth opened wide with shock. The words slowly came out of him, as the sound of the buzzing grew to its loudest.

"... I used to be Dean of Engineering."

The bee flew up to Oz, in front of the swarm of angry bees.

"Wait," the bee shouted. "What did you say?"

"What? What did I say? What do you mean what did I say?" the scared owl whimpered.

"Quiet!" commanded the bee.

The buzz stopped as the bees huddled together on a branch of a nearby tree.

"What did you say you were? Engineer? A Dean?"

The Owl looked shell-shocked. Archie looked at him. The poor owl was frozen. Archie approached him slowly. He nodded to the little bee and gave the owl a slap on the back. The owl shook his head vigorously.

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"What? What did you ask again?"

"You said you were the Dean."

The owl focused and answered properly, now that the swarm of bees had settled.

"Yes. I was the Dean of the Engineer's Association of the Far-North Forest of the Riverlands."

The bee smiled. "Well, why didn't you just say so! I'm the President of the Construction Association of the Great Forest of the Riverlands."

Oz blinked and shook his head. "No way," he smiled. "You're Mrs. Bee Bop?"

"I certainly am. Forgive me now, but I don't know who you are?"

"I'm Oz McThistle."

"I'm so sorry. The name doesn't ring a bell."

"Ooowoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"
cried the Ice Blue Wolf.

"Ooowoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"
cried the Ice White Cub.

"Ooowoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!"
cried Archie.

Oz glared at Archie. "Yes. As I was about to say, I'm actually a lot older than I look." He smiled and showed his good side. "I am a long while out of the engineering business."

"You're an adventurer now?" asked the bee.

"Not really. Well, a bit. I'm just trying, as I said, to reunite our friend the Ice White Cub with his mother, the Ice Blue Wolf. We can't get across the bridge. It's an important bridge, not just for us but for a lot of the animals of the forest, to get from one side of the river to the other. We need some help."

The bee's eyes opened wide with delight. "Well, why didn't you just say so?"

She buzzed off as Oz tried to reply. "I actually did say that."

His voice drowned out by the magnificent rise of thousands and thousands of bees. The Queen Bee swooped over the broken bridge. A few bees followed her across. Buzz. Then the rest of the bees flew to the other side of the bridge and stopped.

"Buzz, buzz," said the Queen. The swarm understood and obeyed intently.

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Half the swarm went to one side of the bridge while the second half went back to the other side. The noise grew as the two sets of bees descended on the two sides of the bridge. Archie and Oz cuddled close with the Ice White Cub. They watched the Ice Blue Wolf, across the river. The sadness in her eyes showed just how much she wanted to be reunited with her cub.

They listened and watched as the bees buzzed away, tending to the bridge. It was as though they were thinking or planning something. The rainbow, the Ice White Wolf and the Oz had no idea what was going on.

After a short while some of the bees flew off. They flew away in a line, one following the other. Slowly but surely the swarm of bees at the bridge diminished down to none. The silence was deafening. The Ice White Cub, the Ice Blue Wolf, Archie, and Oz sat there looking at the silent Queen Bee, waiting to see what would happen.

They waited and then waited some more. The gang of friends began to feel like there was nothing they could do. Maybe they'd have to go back and ask the green alligator to help them again. But that would mean that Archie's colors may be blown further and further away.

"Where have all the bees gone?" asked the sad Ice White Cub.

Archie wished to calm the little wolf cub. He didn't like to see him in distress.

"These bees are very loyal and honest. If they say they'll do something or if the Queen asks them to help, they'll help, they always stick to their word," the rainbow said, giving the cub a comforting hug.

Oz flew over to the cub. "It's true, little cub. Those bees are so loyal to their queen that would practically do anything for her. When she commands them to do something, they always follow through and will never let her down. They are the most loyal creatures in the forest."

The cub smiled. "What about you and Archie?" he asked as he looked at the two mates. "Oz, you promised to help your friend find his colors and you've stuck to your word."

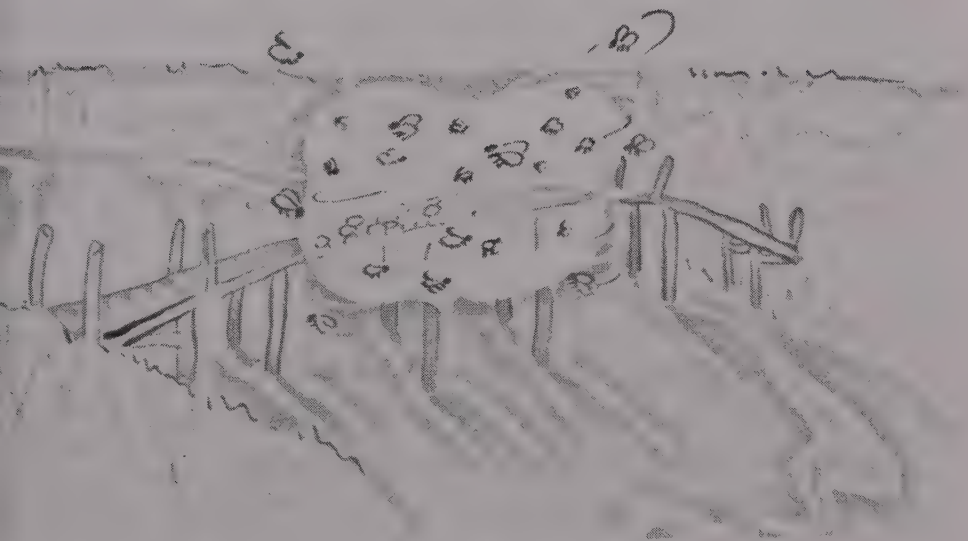
"So far!" said Oz with a smile. "He's my friend and I'm loyal to him because he's loyal to me. We trust each other and we'd do anything for each other."

Archie was getting emotional. He didn't know if he was happy or sad. He just knew he was lucky to have such a great friend in Oz.

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"Sure, we fight," Oz said as he clenched his wings in fists like a boxer and put them up to Archie. "But we love each other dearly."

The owl flew up into the air and spun as he ascended, he shouted. "I told you so! I told you the bees would be back!" he shouted joyfully.



The Ice Blue Wolf and Ice White Cub along with Oz and Archie all smiled as they watched the amazing sight of thousands of bees flying in formation towards them. They looked on in awe as the bees descended on the broken bridge. They rose high and dove down

onto the bridge. The bees covered the bridge for a few seconds each, before flying off back over the hill again and into the meadows.

“What are they doing?” asked Archie.
“Are they going to come back?” The cub and the little rainbow looked at the wise old owl for answers.

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“They seem to be adding bee’s wax to the bridge. Once they deposit their wax, they fly back for another little bit. They are building it up one tiny bit at a time. Thousands of little bits. “The Ice Blue Wolf howled. It got the attention of the others. “If you have a difficult bridge to cross, you should take it one little piece at a time. And you can overcome anything.”

The Queen bee appeared out of nowhere and interrupted the wolf. “And you can do it even faster with a little help from your friends,” she smiled.

The Ice Blue Wolf smiled back at the queen. “You really are the Queen. Your loyalty shall be repaid in full.”

The buzzing began to quieten as the two sides of the repaired bridge began to meet. The Ice White Cub didn’t have time to wait as he bounded across the bridge, jumping the gap in between. He ran to his mother, they licked and groomed each other with loving affection. Archie and Oz waited for the bridge to be completed before they ventured across it. Oz walked across, stomping his feet, much to the bemusement of the little rainbow.

"What are you doing, Oz? Stop stomping your feet, you'll cause the bridge to collapse again," said the rainbow angrily.

"That's what I'm doing, Archie. I'm checking to see if it's structurally sound."

"Sound! What's that supposed to mean?"

"I'm making sure the bees did a good job. Just checking that they adhered to civil engineering codes of practice. Just doing my job".

"I thought you were retired?" asked the rainbow sharply.

"I'm never retired. Once an engineer, always an engineer," the owl smiled back.

The Ice Blue Wolf looked at the owl. "I'm sorry for hurting you today. I truly am. I'm so sorry. I just thought you took my little cub. I didn't realize you were helping him."

The owl quickly shook his head and tried to make the wolf feel at ease.

"No, no. Not at all. You were just trying to protect your cub. You didn't harm me at all." He smiled at the wolf. "You scared me a little. But you didn't harm me, and anyway, you really did think I took your cub and you, as a

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mother, would do anything for your cub, because you love him so much.”

“Thank you, Oz. I don’t know how to repay you. I owe you everything. My little cub means everything to me,” the wolf said with immense honesty and meaning.

“No, no Ice Blue Wolf. I’m all right for everything. Honestly,” said the owl dismissively.

The wolf turned to the Queen Bee and her thousands of hard-working bees. “You too, Queen Bee. How will I ever repay you?”

The bee looked over at the wolf and buzzed.

“Don’t worry about me. I don’t really need repaying. I’m super happy. Maybe the little rainbow might need your help? Repay him!”

The wolf looked at the oddly-colored rainbow. “What happened to you, Archie? What is your journey?”

“I lost all of my colors in the great storm. Oz is helping me find my colors. We’ve had a bit of success.”

Archie looked down at himself. “I’ve got my green and red colors back. I’m very happy

about that," he smiled enthusiastically at the wolf.

The Queen Bee buzzed into the air. "By the power vested in me, I summon the bees of the forest."

Just then every bee in the land rose at once. The Queen bee continued.

I take the true color of the Bee.

I take a piece of all of you.

I take a piece of your color

And you give it to me.

The smile left the rainbow's face. Oz hid behind him.

Just then thousands of bees descended on the Queen for a second. They then all dissipated into the air and back to where they came from.

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Justin Conboy

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The Queen floated in the air, glowing bright yellow. She approached the little rainbow who looked at her with wide amazement. Her furry coat was glowing with bright yellow stripes. Oz backed away from the bee and rainbow. Archie's eyes narrowed as she landed on his little nose again. A little peck on the nose and the yellow color was transferred to the little rainbow.

"For being such a helpful rainbow. For looking after your cub friend here and reuniting him with his mother. You truly are a great little rainbow and you deserve to have your colors returned."

Little Archie started crying, big tears of joy.

"Thank you so much, Queen. I'm honored and delighted to receive your special gift. I feel almost complete."

Oz flew to his friend again. He hugged him. "I told you we would get your colors back. I knew it. You're just a good lad, Archie."

The little cub helped make his new buddy feel better, "Good things happen to good people. Good things will happen to you, Archie."

6

Lightning Strikes

Archie wiped the sniffles from his nose and hugged his new cub friend.

The wolf looked at the ground sadly.

"I wish there were some way I could help you, Archie. I really do." She shook her head. "I'm so happy for you, but I'm sad I can't help you."

The Ice White Cub bounced around his mother. "Mommy, mommy, maybe there is a way."

"How's my little darling?"

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"You're the Ice Blue Wolf. You have the most brilliant blue eyes. They are magical," the little cub said to his mother.

"How on earth do you know?" asked the mother wolf inquisitively. "How do you know that my eyes are magical?"

The wolf cub shirked his shoulders. "Well, actually, I don't. But it couldn't hurt to try!"

"Try what? How am I supposed to transfer my blue eye color to Archie? Trust me, if I could, I would."

"Will you just try? Just give it a go," begged the darling cub.

"How? Stare into his eyes?" the wolf shook her head. "It won't work."

"Mommy. Please. I'm not just a silly little cub. I'm clever. It'll work. Trust me."

Archie stuck his hand up. "Ice Blue Wolf, I've learned that we should trust ourselves, believe in ourselves. I think you should trust your amazing little cub. He's not just a ball of fur, you know. He's a clever little fellow. I'm sure of it."

This inspired little speech brought a smile to Oz. His young buddy was showing his true colors.

"All right. I'll give it a go. I do trust you, my little cub. But sometimes I think your enthusiasm is greater than you know," the Ice Blue Wolf conceded.

Archie stood in front of the wolf. She was looking away. She paused for a moment, building up the suspense of magic, or maybe failure, the latter being too much for her to bear. She looked at her eager cub. He smiled and nodded to his mother. She took a deep breath and looked straight into the little rainbow's eyes. Archie was startled for a moment but suddenly became transfixed by the wolf's mystical blue eyes.

They stared intently into each other's eyes.

They stared and stared.

They continued to stare for another while.

Oz had waited long enough. He coughed aloud.

"Okay, you two love birds. I think the staring competition isn't going to work. Maybe you guys need to kiss."

The owl laughed as the rainbow and wolf looked at him in disgust. "Just kidding. No

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kissing. But I'm not sure if this staring is working out."

The little cub looked sad. The cub's mother comforted her. "It's okay, my cub. You did your best. You had a good idea; I just don't think it is meant to be."

The Ice White Cub began to cry as he scampered away. His mother gave chase after the cub.

Archie ran after them too. He shouted to the mother wolf, "I'll talk to him. He'll be okay."

The wolf let Archie deal with the cub.

"Stop, white cub! Just talk to me for a second, please," asked the rainbow. "You're a good cub. Good things happen to good people, you know. A wise little friend of mine said that to me just now."

The cub stopped. "I just really wanted to help you, Archie. You know, to repay you for all you've done for me."

The cub began to sob uncontrollably.

Archie hugged him. Oz flew over to his two companions and hugged them both. The little bee swished over and landed on the head of the fluffy cub. His mother came over too. She looked at the cub sadly.

"You're a lovely little cub. I'm so proud of you."

They all hugged each other.

Oz looked over at the bee. Then he looked to his new friends. He looked at the bee again and asked a strange question.

"Can you hear a buzzing noise? Are you making a buzzing noise, Queen?"

"I'm not, Oz. I'm in the moment," she answered.

"Well, what's the buzzing noise? Are the bees coming back?"

They all looked around as the buzz became audible to everyone, not just the super hearing of the owl.

"I hear it," said the little rainbow.

"I hear it too," said the Ice White Cub.

The Ice Blue Wolf remained quiet.

"Ice Blue Wolf, are you alright?" the Queen asked.

The wolf remained quiet except for the buzzing noise that was actually coming from her.

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“Mommy. Hey, mommy,” said the cub. “You’re starting to glow, mommy, and you’re making a buzzing noise.”

The cub had become concerned. The owl flew up into the air.

“I think she’s about to explode. She’s like a ticking time bomb!”

“No. Don’t be stupid, Oz,” the Queen said as she grabbed Archie and spun him towards The Ice Blue Wolf. “Look into her eyes, Archie.”

Archie grabbed the wolf’s face and stared straight into her eyes. The sky turned dark. Oz was flying around in a tizzy. The bee flew up into the air as the little cub took a few steps backwards. Thunder could be heard above the buzzing noise. Blue electric light began to spark from the dark clouds down towards the earth. The noise was frightening. Oz went to the little cub and held onto him.

The electric buzzing noise got louder and louder as the lightning came nearer and nearer. The thunder was upon them. The lightning struck the Ice Blue Wolf and Archie at the same time. They were blown away from each other with the force. The darkness cleared. Light shone as the little cub attended his mother and Oz checked on his best friend.

The Ice White Cub licked his mother's face. "Are you okay mommy? Please, mommy. Wake up. Are you okay?" The poor cub was a bit distressed.

The Ice Blue Wolf opened one eye and shook her head.

"Mommy. You're okay!"

Oz flew down and grabbed his little friend. He shook him dramatically.

"Oh, Archie. Are you okay? Are you okay, Archie? Please, please be okay Archie," he begged and pleaded.

The little rainbow blinked as he opened his eyes wide. He looked around. The Queen checked that both her companions were healthy. She smiled when she saw that they were both fine. The little owl screamed so loud.

"Oh, Archie!" He shook his head left and right again. "Oh, no! What has become of you?" The owl flew up and swooped around uncontrollably as Archie looked at him in disbelief. "Oh no, dear Archie! Oh God!"

The rainbow didn't understand where all the amateur dramatics were coming from.

"Enough about me, Oz. Are you all right?" asked the rainbow.

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The wise old owl stopped swooping around in the air as soon as he heard Archie's voice. Forgetting about gravity for a moment or two, he fell into Archie's arms.

Archie shook his head as he looked at the silly old owl. "Why are you so hysterical, Oz?"

"Oh, Archie I thought I lost you for a second." He paused and kicked a pebble, as he looked at the ground. "I just thought I lost my best friend. I never want to let you go, Archie," he sniffled.

The little rainbow placed his hand on his friend.

"Please don't cry, Oz. I'm with you now. I'm always with you and always will be."

The owl stopped crying and looked up. He was ready to give his friend a giant hug and a smile. But as he looked up from the ground, he noticed the little rainbow had added a color to his rainbow.

"You got your blue color back, Archie! You have blue now!" shouted the owl in delight.

Archie looked down past his red, green, and yellow stripes. He looked at his shiny blue stripe and was overjoyed.

"Oz. I've got another color now! I have four colors now, Oz!"

Oz turned to him with that big smile again. "You're right, Archie. You have your red, green, yellow and blue colors."

Archie ran to the Ice Blue Wolf and hugged her. The Ice White cub joined in. Oz and the Queen Bee looked on, smiling.

"What will you do now Archie? You are still missing a few colors," asked the wolf.

Archie nodded a few times towards Oz, who in turn smiled back. The rainbow raised his fist triumphantly.

"We're going to continue south and see if we can find the rest of these colors," announced the brave rainbow with confidence.

The wolf howled and agreed with the rainbow. "You'll go far, little rainbow. You have a very good attitude and an enormous heart, not to mention a great friend in that wise old owl."

Archie hugged the wolf and cub one last time.

"We'll meet again, Archie. Have fun too," said the little cub.

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"Good luck, Oz and Archie. Stay together. You are stronger as a team," the Ice Blue Wolf said to the two pals.

The Ice White Cub and his mother headed north from where they had come. Archie and Oz watched as they walked away. The Queen Bee sat on Archie's shoulder, looking at the two wolves walk off into the distance.



Justin Conboy

7

The Royal Rainbow

The day was passing fast. The sun was no longer overhead. Over half the day was gone. The rainbow felt good. Oz, perched on Archie's shoulder, felt great. The bee sat on Archie's other shoulder as he followed the road due south.

"What are you going to do, Queen? Do you want to come with us?" asked the little rainbow. "We'd love you to tag along with us. It'd be so much fun to have you along."

Oz flew up into the air and spun around. "Oh, please do, Queen Bee. You're so nice and great fun. We'd love to have you."

"You are correct. I certainly am great fun and super nice," said the queen. "I think it would be a great adventure with you two."

Archie stretched his finger out in front of him. The bee flew onto the tip of it. The rainbow addressed the bee.

"It would be a royal honor to have the Queen Bee with us on our adventures. You've already helped us once with building the bridge, and you've found one of my colors. I am so delighted that you helped us, and I'm sure you'll definitely help me some more if you come with us. But that said, if you ever need anything, I'll be here for you. I promise."

Archie stopped walking and knelt on the ground. He bowed his head while still holding his hand out in front of himself.

"Arise, young rainbow," the queen demanded. The little rainbow looked up at her.

"I am your queen. You shall be my loyal subject." Archie wasn't too sure what the queen was talking about, but he went along with it anyway. "I now pronounce you a member of The Royals of Earth, Sea and Sky."

Archie smiled. "What does that mean, my Queen?"

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"It means that you are seen in the same light as the Lion, the Eagle, the Great White Shark and many other Royals of the earth, sea, and sky.

"Me? Little old Archie? How am I to be seen in the same light as those animals?" Archie giggled at his word pun, bee. "Do you see what I did there? Bee!" He looked around to no-one laughing at his pun!

Oz shook his head in dismay at the little rainbow's miniature joke.

"Queenie," said the owl, who immediately regretted not calling the queen by her royal title. "Pardon me, my Queen." The owl bowed with one hand on his heart and the other outstretched to his side.

"It's all right, my feathered friend. No need for formalities." The Queen lifted her tiny crown and smiled. "Archie has shown great courage, love and friendship to everyone he has met. He is indeed great. He is the king of love and friendship, as far as I'm concerned."

"Who am I to disagree with your grace and knowledge, my Queen," said the owl humbly, still bowing to his majesty.

"All right, Oz, that's enough. Arise," the Queen ordered.

The bee flew around a bit. "So, we have green, yellow, blue, red and we're missing orange, indigo and violet. Come on you two, we have work to do. We have to help our little buddy find his colors."

Archie started skipping with excitement.

"Are you coming with us, Queen Bee?" he jumped and hugged Oz, falling over in the process and squashing the little owl.

"Get off me, you silly rainbow!" the owl said in his most grumpy voice, far from the royal tones he used when talking to the Queen.

"Please, please, please come with us, Queen Bee!"

"Yes, my little friend. I'll help you with your adventure through the forest and along the rivers in your quest to find your colors."

"Yippee," roared the rainbow with all his might.

Oz looked on as his friend, overjoyed at the fact that his brand-new friend was coming on their adventure. Hmmm, he muttered to himself.

"Come on already. Let's get a move on, Archie," shouted the owl. "We have work to do. Due south."

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The Queen and Archie stopped smiling and followed the disgruntled owl.

Oz walked up ahead for a bit along the river by himself. The sun was beginning to descend. Their shadows grew long as the day drew to a close. The sound of the river flowing south was pleasing to the ear. Archie's feet swished through the low grass on the semi-beaten track. The forest to their right started to become dark. The sun was telling them it was time to bed down for the night. Archie yawned and spoke at the same time.

"What'll we do when the sun goes down, Oz?"

Oz and The Queen looked at the little rainbow in disgust.

"Sorry. I'm just so tired. I didn't mean to yawn and speak at the same time," the rainbow explained as he yawned again.

"You could have at least covered your mouth," said the disgusted owl. "I could nearly see what you had for dinner; your mouth was open so wide." He shook his head at the rainbow.

"Oh, no. I'm starving too! Thanks for reminding me. I haven't eaten since breakfast.

I'm so hungry and tired. And, it's getting dark. What'll we do, Oz?"

"Good question, Archie. But, right now I don't have an answer," the owl quickly replied. "Maybe, ask your buddy the Queen?"

The Queen buzzed up from her perch, "Yes. It's getting very late now. We'll need to get some food and some shelter. We should do it as soon as possible."

Archie continued walking for a little while, looking in towards the forest, trying to see a cubby hole or a cave where they could bed down for the night. Oz flew off ahead and started picking some berries and apples for teatime. The Queen Bee flew off to get some honey from one of her nearby friends. Twilight was darkening the river and the pathway was becoming harder to see.

"We really need to find a place to stop now," shouted Archie.

The Queen Bee buzzed back, and Oz followed a few seconds later.

"You're right, it's getting very dark," said the worried owl. "We'll just have to stop here by this big tree. Even my eyesight is struggling to see in this darkness."

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"I can't see anything, Oz," said the rainbow. He sat beside a large fallen tree. Its trunk had been hollowed out over time, by rot and gnawing animals.

"This will do if it starts raining again."

"This will do fine for a few hours, anyway," confirmed Oz.

Archie snuggled into the hollow tree trunk. Oz followed behind him, the Queen Bee behind the owl. There was plenty of room. Archie and his pals looked out across the wide river. The moon had begun to shine. The stars were still in the black night sky. There were no clouds to keep the three buddies warm.

Oz laid out his berries and apples to share with his fellow adventurers. The Queen dropped down a few pieces of honeycomb for dessert. It was a small feast, but a feast all the same, especially as they hadn't eaten since before the great storm. They picked up their favorite fruit and started eating. Archie was a growing lad and needed a lot more energy from his food than Oz. He scoffed a couple of apples in no time, then wolfed down a half dozen handfuls of berries. He snapped the honeycomb in half, ate that piece in one go. Before it had hit Archie's belly, he was fast asleep.

“Poor little rainbow,” said the Queen.

Oz nodded in agreement. “He’s been through so much today. He really has inspired me. I can’t believe how much strength and drive he has.”

“You’re right, Oz, he’s really an inspiration.”

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors



Justin Conboy

8

The Fiery Explosion

Oz snuggled in beside Archie, trying to keep him a little warm as the temperature outside plummeted. A while had passed but the owl just couldn't sleep, he was tossing and turning beside Archie.

"At least when we were walking, we were keeping ourselves warm," he said to the Queen.

"You're right. It's getting very cold now. Archie would never be out in this kind of weather."

"He's a warm-blooded fella."

The Queen sat on the little rainbow's head. "He's feeling very cold."

The little rainbow began to shiver. Oz rubbed Archie's arms, trying to warm him up."

"Maybe I should try and build a fire for him. I'll get some sticks."

"Good idea, Oz," said the Queen.

Oz walked deep into the trunk of the fallen tree. He gathered up a few dry leaves and some very dry wood. He came back to the opening of the tree trunk and placed the kindling in a bundle. He found two dry twigs at the entrance to the hollow tree trunk.

"Thankfully all the kindling had been out of the reach of the rain during the storm that day. How are you going to light it?" asked the Queen.

Oz looked up at her. "I'm an engineer. I'll use friction."

"Two sticks, so?"

"Yes," Oz said, as he picked up a couple of suitable fire-starting sticks.

The wise owl placed one flat stick on the ground. He pecked a little notch into it. He placed the second stick into the notch. Oz then placed some dry kindling beside the notch and began to roll the stick in his wings.

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"That'll do it, Oz. Has anyone ever told you that you're very clever?" The Queen bee smiled at the old owl struggling with the effort.

The owl took her comments as sarcastically as they were meant. "It'll work. Trust me."

Oz pushed a few more dry bits of material towards the notch and began rolling the stick in his wings even more vigorously than before.

"Come on, Oz. Put your back into it," the Queen said with a wry smile.

"I... am!" the owl strained to say. He paused for a moment and put more effort in this time. Sweat beads were forming on the owl's forehead.

"Come on, Oz. You got this."

The Queen bee was actually encouraging the owl now. A small amount of smoke started to billow from the wooden notch.

"No really, Oz. You are nearly there."

The owl gritted his beak, closed his eyes, and gave it his all. He rubbed the stick as fast as he possibly could.

“Look! Look! The smoke! It’s really burning now. The embers are going bright red! It’s about to go, Oz, don’t give up. It’s about to go.”

The owl was giving it his all. Rubbing the twigs together so fast, creating as much friction heat as he possibly could. The notch was glowing bright red. It was so close to catching fire when suddenly *BOOOOOOOOM*, a massive explosion turned the sky purple.

Archie immediately woke with the noise. Confused, he looked at Oz who was sitting, wide-eyed, in shock, on his bum beside his bundle of smoldering kindling. He looked around for the Queen. She had flown deep into the hollow tree trunk as soon as she heard the noise.

“What was that?” she asked meekly.

Oz shook his head as the Queen Bee buzzed back to see if everyone was okay. The owl questioned the Queen. “Did I do something? Was that me?”

The bee looked at the kindling. “No. You haven’t set fire to it yet. It must have been something...”

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BOOOOOOOOM! The sky lit up with another color purple. The three concerned buddies all ducked at the same time.

"Where did that come from?" asked Oz.

"What's going on?" Archie questioned again.

"I'll find out," said the Queen Bee decisively.

"I'll go with you!" yelled the owl.

Archie rubbed his eyes and questioned himself aloud. "What's going on? Can someone tell me what has just happened? Am I still asleep? Am I dreaming or is this happening in real life?"

Archie's eyes followed the two weightless scouts as they flew into the dark night sky.

BOOOOOOOOM!

A slightly different purple color came from an area a small bit down the river. Everyone had now seen where it had come from. Archie began running in its direction. Oz dove towards the spot, with the Queen flying behind him. The three friends stopped as soon as they spotted the tall skinny old man throwing another burning device into the air.

BOOOOOOOOM!

“What are you doing?” asked the Queen. “Some of us were trying to sleep. Have you no consideration for the wildlife of the forest and the riverbank?”

The tall old man was startled. He was standing beside a little cabin which stood a small distance from his house and there was a small bonfire in between them. He fixed his long white scraggly hair as he turned to where the voice come from. But he couldn't see the tiny bee in the dark.

“Who said that?” he said in an exquisite English accent. He looked into the dark night, towards the river, towards the forest. He still couldn't see where the voice came from.

“Come out and show yourself! Who said that?” he demanded.

The Queen flew towards the old man. The man could now see the bee, lit up by the bonfire. The old man let a yelp as he stumbled back towards the fire, nearly falling into it in the process.

“Did you say that, little bee?”

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Justin Conboy

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"Yes, I most certainly did," the Queen said angrily. "What in the Great Forests are you doing here, setting off explosives?"

"I'm working on some firework combinations."

Archie and Oz came out of the dark and presented themselves.

"So much for my little bit of sleep," the rainbow said.

"Have you a license for fireworks, Mister?" asked the disgruntled owl.

"Wait. Hang on a second. Okay. I can see and believe the talking bee. I can even understand the talking owl, but the talking...um...rainbow! Funny-looking rainbow!" he laughed.

"That's just strange," the old man said, much to the annoyance of the Archie.

"I'm not a strange rainbow. Don't call me that," Archie said angrily.

"Aren't you? You're not a complete rainbow. You're barely half a rainbow," the old man said.

Archie became upset.

"I mean, you've only got four colors. Rainbows are supposed to have seven colors."

Oz interjected. He shook his owl head. "What is your problem?"

"Nothing!" replied the old man. "I'm just asking a few questions. Just like you're asking questions of me!"

The queen weighed in on the argument. "You're letting off explosives at night, and now you're insulting my friend?"

"It's not the night-time, it's hardly the evening. I'm experimenting with colors. Trying to make a few new ones. I didn't mean to insult your rainbow friend," the old man cleared his throat as if he wasn't sure whether to call the rainbow by its technical name, even though it only had four colors.

"I just haven't ever spoken to an owl or a bee and definitely never expected to speak to a rainbow in my entire life. It's crazy to me. I'm a little bit shocked by it. So, sorry if I come across as being rude. It's not very becoming of me."

Archie shrugged his shoulders and folded his arms. "Well, you are rude. Very rude."

The tall old man bent down to Archie and reiterated. "I'm very, very sorry, my dear friend."

"He's no friend of yours," said Oz.

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"I'm very, very sorry if I insulted you, little rainbow," the old man said, repeating himself.

Archie looked at him for a moment. Everyone paused. "Okay. As long as you didn't mean it," the forgiving little rainbow stood there, still sulking a bit.

"Okay," said the old man.

"Okay," said Oz.

"Okay," said the old man.

"Okeydokey," said the Queen Bee.

They all looked at the bee and laughed. The ice had been broken between the four of them.

"What are you three doing out at this hour of the night anyway?" asked the fireworks man.

Oz paused and scratched his head. "Well... it's kind of a long story."

"I used to be a proper rainbow. But the great storm earlier today caused all my colors to get blown off." The rainbow stood there with arms outstretched. "That's why I look like this."

"Oh, my poor boy. I'm so sorry. I certainly didn't mean to mock your misfortune. I'm desperately sorry. Please forgive me again."

The old man shook his head with embarrassment. "I truly am sorry."

"It's okay. We all make mistakes. No offence taken," said Archie.

"I feel like an idiot." He then beckoned towards his little stone house. "Come in. Come in. You must be famished. You must be freezing out on this cold night."

Oz, the bee, and Archie looked at each other. The wise old owl whispered to his friends. "Never look a gift horse in the mouth."

"Yes. Please. Come in. I have the fire on and food ready for plating."

The three of them looked at each other and nodded, before walking into the old man's pretty little stone house.

"This place is lovely," Oz said cheerfully as he looked around the house at all the laboratory equipment. "Microscope, telescope, spectroscope, oscilloscope, otoscope, horoscope." The owl laughed. "Only joking, there is no horoscope!"

"Look at all the old man's lab jackets," Archie said to Oz, as he looked over towards a brown wooden coat rack with about six jackets hanging on it. One jacket was as burnt as the next.

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

"This guy must be a scientist. But judging by his burnt-out crispy jackets, I think he could be the worst scientist that I've ever seen in my life," Oz sniggered under his breath.

The Queen whispered, "Oh. You engineers don't like scientists, do you?" She looked at Archie. "It's a known fact!"

"Hey, old man. What's in the little shed outside?" asked Archie.

"Old man? Okay. That's a fair dig at me, but I'm actually a professor. But Old Man is fine, in the circumstances. Please. Follow me," he said as he turned from spooning up some dinner.

"Come and see my fireworks den." He led them all to the little cabin.

"What?" The excited owl stopped speaking as he looked around the little stone cabin. He spied the walls with racks of chemicals, all in little glass jars, all different colors. Another wall with barrels of chemicals leaning up against it.

Oz scoffed. "It's true, you know." He looks back towards the professor. "It's amazing here, but have you never heard of health & safety? This place is a tinderbox, old man."

“Okay. I may be old, but I still have a name” The old man retorted to the owl. “It’s Isaac to you. Professor Isaac, if you don’t mind and yes, I have heard of health & safety. I just don’t practice it...much. The fact that I’ve put all my explosives out here in the cabin is a start, I suppose.”

Archie stood beside a candle, rubbing his own arms trying to warm himself up.

Isaac went to a cupboard and poured out a glass of some sort of green, smoking drink. “Here, my rainbow friend. This will warm you up.”

Archie turned and looked at the green drink. “I’ve already got the color green.”

“Huh!” The professor said out loud. “No, it’ll just warm you up.”

“Oh, okay,” the rainbow said.

Oz looked on, shaking his head. Archie acknowledged his friend and took a drink anyway. “Mmmmm. Yummy and warm.”

“Your green color has disappeared, Archie,” Oz said jokingly.

Archie immediately looked down at his colors, worried that he had actually lost one of them. “You’re so mean, Oz!”

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"Well, you shouldn't accept drinks from strangers."

"What's all this talk about colors?" asked the Professor.

"As we mentioned, Archie lost his colors today in the storm and we're trying to find them for him. We've done pretty good so far. We have four."

"Oh, my word. That's amazing. Well done. You have yellow," the professor said as he looked at Archie.

"The Queen gave me that," said Archie with a smile.

"You have green."

Oz piped up. "Got that off a crocodile."

"Alligator," the Queen said, firmly putting the mistaken owl in his place.

"We got the blue off the Ice Blue Wolf," Archie said with a great big smile. "We found her Ice White Cub."

"Found?" Oz said with a laugh, rubbing his neck. "Archie rescued him and returned him to his mother, no less."

"My word, you three are amazing," the professor professed.

"And we got the red color off the Great Red Deer. We reused her from the rushing river after the storm," Archie said with delight as he raised his arms up in the air in delight.

"Okay, so you guys need indigo, violet and orange," the professor confirmed.

"You're making fireworks? Professor!" asked Oz abruptly.

"I certainly was. I'm experimenting with many different color combinations." He nodded to his new audience. "Did you know that white light is made up from the colors of the rainbow? The rainbow is the most amazing scientific thing that we see on a day-to-day basis."

"Yes. If you blended all my seven colors into one it would be the color white," the excited rainbow said. "But not now. Cos, I don't have all my colors."

The professor scratched his chin. "Why did you get the colors off the Great Red Deer and the crocodile?"

"Alligator," said the bee.

"Yes. Alligator." The professor nodded to the bee. "Noted," he said to her, still nodding. "Alligator and the others? May I ask again, Archie?"

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"I rescued the Great Red Deer from the rushing river."

"Bravery," the professor answered immediately and insightfully as he tapped his chin.

"I got the green from the alligator for letting him bring me across the river without being afraid."

"Trust," said the professor as he looked at the ceiling of his little stone cabin, still scratching his chin.

"I got the blue off the Ice Blue Wolf for bringing the Ice White Cub back to her."

"Humanity," said the Professor as he looked down from the ceiling, down to Archie. "Humanity. You helped your fellow man, in his hour of need," the professor smiled.

"And the Queen Bee gave me yellow for helping the cub cross the broken yellow bridge, where the Ice Blue Wolf was waiting for her cub."

"Ingenuity. Using your brain." The professor nodded and smiled. "Very ingenious." The professor looked at Oz. Then looked back at Archie. "What about love? You haven't got a color for being a lovely little fellow, have you? You seem like the loveliest little fellow."

"He is," said the Queen, with Oz nodding beside her.

"What about your violet friend beside you?"

"You mean Oz? He's purple."

"No, he's not," replied the professor. "I'm an expert in all things color. I'm a professor of chromatics, I'll have you know." The professor didn't like people questioning his expertise.

Oz laughed. "Professor of chromatics! I've heard it all now."

"I am." The professor scratched his head and rushed over to a jar, one which had a purple-colored substance in it. He pulled out a piece of paper from a roll, he then poured out a handful of the substance onto the paper and began to wrap it up into a ball. Oz, Archie, and the Queen looked on with interest as the professor attached a fuse to the bombastic ball and lit it.

"Check this out!" the professor said as he threw the package out the door.

BOOOOOOOM!

The cabin shook. Oz, Archie and the Queen ducked under the lab table as a purple light burst through the door and windows.

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"See? Purple. Which isn't your color, Owlie," the professor said forcefully.

He ran to another jar containing a yellow-white powder. He poured out one quarter of a cup of the substance onto some rolled-up paper. Then he grabbed a jar with bright white powder and poured out three quarters of a cup of that.

"Two parts blue to one-part red. Slightly different chemical ratio." He added a fuse and wrapped it up again. He lit the fuse. "Now, this is the color violet. You'll see that it is a match for your little friend, Oz."

"Yes. Okay I can see that. Even though I'm not violet, I'm purple. Would you mind throwing that out the door please? That fuse is very short," the worried owl demanded.

"Did you know that saltpeter is a natural mineral source for the chemical potassium nitrate, KNO_3 ? Some people spell it s-a-l-t-p-e-t-e-r, rather than s-a-l-t-p-e-t-r-e."

"Please throw it out the door!" the others demanded.

"Also, before systematic naming of chemicals, the old name for saltpeter was nitrate of potash or Chinese salt or Chinese Snow?"

"Please professor, hurry! Throw it out the door!" shouted Archie.

"The fuse!" shouted the bee.

"Three parts potassium sulfate, to one part potassium nitrate..."

"Please, professor? It's going to blow!" shouted Oz.

"Oh. It's perfectly safe. I usually have about ten or fifty seconds until it explodes," the professor said.

Archie ran for the door as soon as he heard the professor's indication of how much time they had before the explosion. The Queen followed directly behind the rainbow. Oz was in shock, he spun up into the air with fear, hitting his head on the ceiling, knocking himself out cold as he plummeted to the floor.

The professor screamed in fright at the sight of the owl flying up into the air and seeing him fall to the ground, unconscious. He dropped the violet explosive package on the ground and fled the stone cabin. Archie looked back, hoping to find his Oz, but he couldn't see him. The professor ran past Archie, screaming at the top of his lungs, his hair and lab coat trailing in the wind.

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Justin Conboy

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

The Queen looked back through the window and could see that Oz was laying on the ground. "He is unconscious, Archie. He's on the ground. The explosion is going to go off."

Archie ran back to the house. He paused as he looked at his dear friend on the ground, helpless. The fuse was nearly burned to the explosive. Archie closed his eyes. He squeezed them closed for another second before running into the house and diving on top of the explosive beside his feathered friend.

BOOOOOOOM!

A violent, violet light burst from the house as it threw Archie into the air. The explosion shook the foundations and rattled the walls of the stone cabin. Archie smashed into the ceiling of the professor's lab, which in turn came crashing down on top of him and Oz.

"Archie! Oz!" the bee shouted as loud as she could. "Professor! You have to go back in there and see if they are all right."

9

Not Greyscale Again!

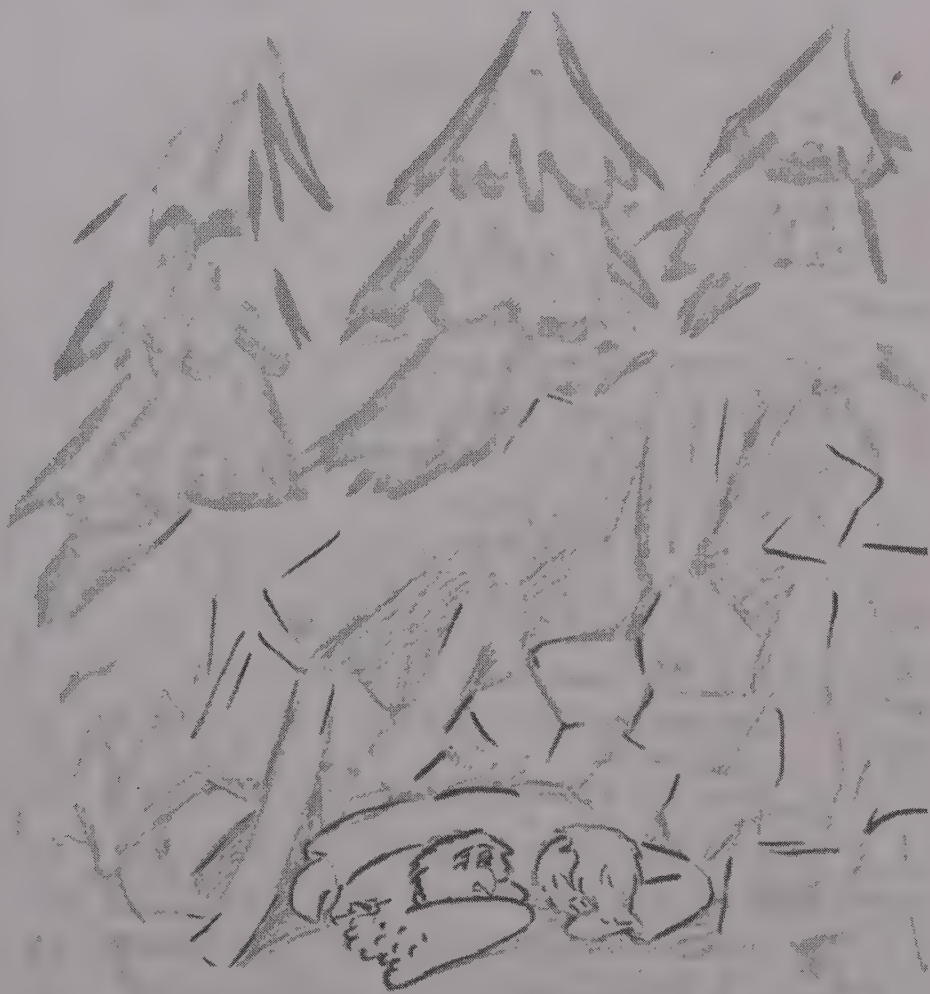
The professor stopped screaming, composed himself and ran back to the house.

“Oh, no! Archie! Oz! Where are you?” he shouted as he started pulling stones and rubble off them.

The Queen followed behind. She looked down into all the little crevices. “I think I see them.”

The Professor lit a lantern and tried to see into the crevice. He couldn't see the rainbow or the owl. He used all his strength to move the rubble from where the queen had indicated the two of them to be. Rubble, stones, rocks, and dust lay everywhere.

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Justin Conboy

The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors

The Queen spotted the arched shape of the rainbow and spotted her other friend beside him.

"There he is!" she shouted to the Professor as she flew down to him. "Archie! Oz! Are you okay, guys?"

The professor pulled a large piece of the roof off the two pals.

"Oh no. What have I done? I'm so sorry. I'm just a stupid old man. I shouldn't have been playing with fire and explosives. I'm so silly." He was on his knees weeping. He reached out and pulled an unconscious Archie out of the rubble. Oz shook his head as he woke up.

"Where am I?" asked the shocked owl.

"You're in the professor's cabin," said the little bee. "You hit your head off the ceiling."

Oz looked down at his best friend.

"Archie! Wake up, Archie!" He looked at the professor and then at the Queen. "What happened to him? Is he going to be okay?"

"I'm sorry, Oz. I dropped the violet explosive and Archie ran in and jumped on you to save you from the impact."

Oz started crying. "Oh, Archie! Please wake up, my friend. Please be okay. You really are the bravest pal in the whole world."

The owl was on his knees, along with the professor, with the Queen sitting sadly on the rainbow's shoulder. The colorful hero didn't move.

"The poor little fellow," said the bee.

The professor put his hand on the rainbow's head. "Rainbows have a lot of power you know. They are mystical things, indeed. Maybe the explosion was just what he needed. A massive burst of energy."

Oz was not too pleased with the professor's explanation. "How could an exposition help anyone?"

"Well, the sun is a constant explosion. It is nuclear fusion going on and on. It gives out white light which, as we know, is made up of all the colors of the rainbow," the professor explained.

Archie coughed and opened his eyes. "Ouch! What happened?"

Oz, The Queen Bee, and the professor jumped for joy.

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"You're okay, Archie!" Oz said as he hugged his buddy.

"Oh no, Oz," Archie said worryingly.

"What?" questioned the owl.

"Now. You've lost your colors. You're just grey like me too."

The owl looked at himself and screeched. "What? The explosion must have taken my color."

"No, no. I don't think it could have," explained the professor.

"You lost me my one and only color! Purple!" shouted the angry bird.

"No. It was a violet combination. So, if you're actually purple it couldn't have taken your color. Unless you're violet," the professor pleaded his case.

The Owl screamed even louder again. "Archie! Oh, no! You've lost all your colors again!"

Archie looked down at himself and screamed. "Nooooo."

"You're greyscale, Archie. Oh, no!" said the disgruntled owl.

"After all my hard work," the rainbow said as he cried.

The two friends looked at each other sobbing.

The Queen buzzed around, trying to think of something to say. But couldn't. Words had escaped her.

"No. It's not the explosion," the professor said.

"Shut up you, professor. I've had just about enough of you," said the extremely angry owl. "All that hard work, rescuing the Great Red Deer, trusting the green crocodile."

The Queen didn't think it was an appropriate time to correct the owl about it being an alligator, not a crocodile.

Archie and Oz went back to sobbing. The owl continued his barrage.

"Finding the little cub and returning it to his mother. Fixing the river bridge. All for nothing. Worse than that. You lost my color too!"

"No, trust me. Look at each other," the professor pleaded.

The Queen looked at Oz and then looked at Archie.

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"No, really, guys. Just look at each other.
At your tears."

Oz looked at the tracks of Archie's tears



and noticed that he had color under the tracks. "Oh. Okay, I see," the owl said with a bit of embarrassment.

Archie noticed the purple color under the tear tracks of Oz. He reached out and patted Oz. Dust bellowed from his feathered friend.

"Oh. It's just the dust from the rubble. Making us look like we lost all our colors. Okay. Grey dust."

"Well, that's not embarrassing!" the wise old owl said to himself.

"Come into the house and we'll clean you guys up," the professor said softly.

They all entered the professor's stone house. He took the hose from the bath and turned on the water, holding the hose over the bathtub. "Who's first?"

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"No. You're all right, professor, I'd rather dust myself off naturally," the owl said as he spun himself around, returning himself to a slightly whiter shade of his normal color.

Archie stepped into the bath and the professor hosed him down. The rainbow smiled as the warm water tickled his belly.

The Queen shouted "Look! He even got his violet color back! Now that must have been from the explosion."

The professor quickly finished hosing down the rainbow. He turned off the water. "He has green, yellow, blue, red and now he has violet. The only two grey stripes are where orange and indigo should be."

The owl shook his head. "You didn't even get the color correct. You said I was violet."

"Tea, anyone?" announced the professor, trying to change the subject.

Oz kneeled beside his friend and hugged him as he draped a towel around his shoulders.

"We still have so much more of our adventure left to do, Archie." The tears began to flow from the owl's eyes again and onto the rainbow's cheek. The owl hugged Archie some more.

“Ouch!” said the rainbow. “I’m surprised I’m not black and blue from all the bruises today.” This caused everyone to laugh. “We must celebrate. Let us have some dinner, a nice hot cup of that green stuff again and a little bit of a sleep for ourselves. We still have a lot more adventuring to do tomorrow. We need our energy. We have got to get those two other colors.”

Oz smiled at the rainbow’s spirit. He was so happy to have his friend back. He spun up into the air with even more excitement and bashed his head off the ceiling again, knocking him clean out. The owl fell into the lap of the rainbow.

“Oz! Oh, Oz! Are you okay?” the rainbow asked.

The Queen Bee looked at the professor. They both shook their heads.

“He’ll be fine, Archie,” said the Queen. “He was awake while you were knocked out. I’m sure he’ll come round shortly.”

Archie stood up and hugged his best friend. He placed him on the table as Oz shook himself off.

“What happened?” asked the owl as he woke.

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"You really must stop doing that spinning thing indoors," advised the professor as he plated out some lovely food for them.

They all smiled at each other.

"Your colors, Archie," said the professor.

"You only need two more colors, Archie," said Oz.

"No. You only need one," the professor said, correcting the owl. "You have your indigo color too."

They all looked at Archie in confusion. He didn't have an indigo color on him.

"Indigo." The owl shook his head. "If you're referring to me, I'm purple."

"That's it!" said the professor. "You're not violet or purple. You're indigo." The professor shook his head also. "I always get those two mixed up. I'm telling you, Oz. You're the missing color. You'll see."

"We won't see, because I'm purple, you silly old man," the wise old owl said.

"Either way, you're both okay," the bee announced.

"Except for the two bumps on Oz's head," Archie said, laughing. That laughter in turn

caused everyone else to laugh, none more than the professor. The professor was just delighted that no one had been badly injured in his lab.

“You will all stay for supper, my dear friends, and stay the night. I’ll fix you up with a bed, Archie. Oz, I’ll make a little nest for you out of a blanket. Your majesty, *ammmm*, a honey jar, maybe?” the professor asked.

“A honey jar! Why would I want to sleep in a honey jar?”

Everyone smiled at the professor’s silly idea of a bed fit for a queen.

Later that evening, after they had all had their fill, the three friends snuggled up in Archie’s bed. They slept well and had sweet dreams about the adventure ahead in the morning.

10

A Great Night's Sleep

The next morning, Archie, Oz and the Queen woke from their great slumber. A well-deserved rest after an eventful day. The professor had fixed them a hearty breakfast, one that would see them through the morning and then sent them on their way. They waved goodbye to the professor and headed south on their journey to find the two remaining colors for Archie.

As soon as Oz got out of earshot of the professors he smirked and said, "I think we dodged a bullet there. Crazy old man could have killed us all."

"Well, he did get one of my colors back, and he gave us a bed for the night, and supper, and breakfast," said the rainbow.

"Only too right, after what he did to us," the owl scoffed.

"Are you going to stay with us another day, Queen?" asked the rainbow. "Sit on my shoulder if you want, my Queen."

"I certainly am. I'm not going to leave until we have rescued your last two remaining colors," she replied, much to the glee of the little rainbow.

"Oh, yippee, that's such good news, my Queen. I'm so delighted!"

Oz was becoming a bit disgruntled with the two of them. He had started ahead and beaten down a tiny track beside the river with his little feet. Archie ran after him.

"Hold up, Oz. Wait up for us."

Oz ignored the rainbow.

"What's wrong with you, Oz? What did I do?"

"Nothing, Archie. You did nothing," the owl scolded.

"Why are you angry with me, so, Oz?"

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"Because you did nothing. You're supposed to be the nice, friendly, kind-hearted guy. But what about me? You're all over the Queen Bee as if she's your best friend."

"I'm sorry, Oz. I didn't realize."

The Queen buzzed off for a while, to let the best friends sort out their problems.

"You're all 'yippee' to the Queen. But what about me? I helped you get your colors back, too. You'd be still looking like a badly-printed newspaper if it weren't for me!"

"Stop, Oz," Archie said as he jumped in front of the disgruntled owl, forcing the owl to halt his progress. "I'm sorry I didn't acknowledge you more. Maybe I took your friendship too much for granted. I shouldn't have done that. You're my best friend and you always will be. I should never forget that."

Oz looked the little rainbow in the eyes.

"You're damn right you shouldn't. I'm the one who was, and always has been, here for you. Ever since the day I found you when you were a little tiny rainbow. You're a big rainbow now, and you should know better than to forget who got you here."

The Queen buzzed a little closer, sensing that the two would make up soon and become best friends again.

“Oz, I’m very sorry. I’m really excited to be on this adventure with you. You’re my best...”

Archie’s speech suddenly began to slur. “You’re my best...” Archie began to sway back and forth, his eyes rolling around in his head. “/loveeeeyouuuuu Ozeee...”

“Archie, are you ok? You’re sounding very funny, really strange.” The Owl grabbed his best friend. “Archie! What’s wrong with you? You’re scaring me.”

“*Besshhttttfrienddd...*” With that the little rainbow collapsed on the grassy track.

Ophidia & Magnus

"Oh, no! Oh, my. Are you okay, Archie? Wake up, Archie!" tears began to flow from the owl's giant eyes.

The Queen swooped down to see what was happening. "Archie, what happened to you?"

The Queen spotted a rustle in the grass. She sped after it. She followed the rustle as it slithered through the grass. Oz spotted the Queen flying after something. He didn't know what it was, but he was sure it harmed his little friend. He spun up into the air as fast as he could, with a look of anger and determination on his face.

He reached the clouds and began to dive, traveling faster than any animal on the planet.

He reached a speed of one-hundred-and-ninety miles per hour, before pulling out of his dive. Just before he did so, he snatched the slithering creature in his claws. The owl brought the creature back to where Archie had collapsed.

The Queen followed behind. The angry owl placed the creature on a large stone beside where Archie was laying. He held the creature to the stone with one of his sharp clawed feet.

"What have you done to my friend?" he asked the long, skinny reptile.

The creature hissed at the owl. "I bit him. I'm a snake. It's what I do. I bite things."

The owl was really angry with the snake. He started to press the snake hard against the stone.

"No, Oz!" commanded the Queen. "You must not harm the creature."

"Why not?" the owl asked in confusion as he looked over at the Queen, an angry frown across his brow.

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"Please don't harm me. I didn't mean to bite your little friend," said the snake.

Oz looked back at the snake and questioned him angrily. "You just said that you bit my friend on purpose."



Suddenly a second head appeared from behind the head that Oz was looking at.

"Shut up, Ophidia. I did mean to bite his friend and I'll do it again," said the mean snake head.

"Oh no, Magnus. Why did you do that? Why did you hurt the owl's friend?"

Oz shook his head as he looked from one snake head to the other snake head in dismay. He had never seen a two-headed snake before in his life.

Magnus hissed at Oz, his forked orange tongue thrusting towards the owl.

"I'll bite you too if you come any closer." His sinister voice made the owl even more cautious.

Ophidia begged her other half to stop, "What did they do to you? Why did you bite his

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friend? He's really unwell now, Magnus. He fainted and he is extremely sick."

Magnus uncoiled his long skinny two-toned orange body, rising above the owl. "I bit him because it's who I am. It's what I do."

The owl snapped towards the bad snake head, but it swerved out of the way.

"You better cure him immediately or you'll be mincemeat when I'm finished with you!" Oz snapped.

The bad snake's eyes opened wide with caution and menace, "*Ohhh!* Calm yourself, little owl. You wouldn't want a bite of me. You'll sleep for all eternity."

The Queen buzzed down beside Oz. "As your Queen, I command you to cure my friend."

Magnus laughed loudly. He paused as he smiled at the little bee.

"You have no control over me. I'm wild. I am wild in the forest, I'm wild in the sea and waters. No one controls me. I'm the king of me. You are the Queen of nothing."

"You'll be king of the sky when I get my beak on you!" said the owl. "I'll catch you and I'll bring you up past the clouds and drop you from such a height!"

"Oh, will you now? You'd hurt me, would you?" the bad snake head said as he looked at his twin head Ophidia. "Would you hurt little Ophidia here, too? Would you?"

Oz shook his head slightly. He knew that if he was to do anything to the bad snake head, it would hurt the good snake head.

"No. No, you wouldn't," Magnus said as he began to leave. "I bid you good day." The bad snake laughed as he began to leave.

"Not so fast, Magnus." Ophidia held fast, refusing to let Magnus leave. "I've had enough of you and the hurt you cause. Biting anything you want, hurting good friends, hurting me. You're a bad snake! I don't want to be with you anymore."

Magnus was shocked and angered by Ophidia's nerve. "Little snake, you come with me right now! I'm the boss! I say where we go, and we do what I want to do. I'm the big snake here. You're the little snake, I'm the master!" he shouted at the shy, sad, scared snake head.

Ophidia began to whimper. Magnus pulled to slither away. Ophidia followed sadly.

Oz thought to himself he couldn't just let them slither off into the long grass, he had to do something that would help his little buddy. His

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mind raced as he tried to think of something. He couldn't hurt the snake, for that would only hurt the good snake, what good would that do for Archie?

The Queen buzzed beside Oz and looked into his eyes. "I don't know what to do, Oz."

Oz shouted "Stop!"

Ophidia looked back, but Magnus kept going, pulling the sad, sorrowful Ophidia along.

"Please, Ophidia. You're a good snake. Please help my little friend."

Ophidia pulled against its other half and stopped the bad snake for a moment. Magnus tugged to leave, but Ophidia pulled again, using all her might.

"I'm begging you, Ophidia. Archie is the kindest, best friend in the world," Oz said sadly. "I've just had the stupidest, worst, silly row with him, just before he was bitten."

The owl's sniffles intensified. "Please don't let that row be the last words that I ever say to my best friend."

Ophidia pulled back towards Oz, Archie and the Queen.

"Archie is so much like you, Ophidia. He's a good lad, a good fellow. He'd do anything for

you. He already helped so many today. He helped animals that were much bigger than him, much faster than him, much smarter than him. You don't have to be the little snake anymore. You can help him. I believe that you have the good venom in you. You can reverse the bad venom. I hope you do. It's Archie's only chance."

"Don't listen to that foolish old owl," shouted Magnus to his twin. "I bite whatever I want, because I'm the greatest, most fearsome animal in the world. Everyone will respect me. Everyone will know my name. Magnus Serpens: The deadliest Orange Adder in the whole world. The most fearsome. I'll be king."

"No," said the Queen. "You won't."

"No," said the owl. "You will not."

"No," said Ophidia. "You won't. You'll be known as the mean, bad, horrible snake. The two-headed, most awful snake who ever lived. And it's not just you. It's me who will have to live with that bad name. You'll never be king because people don't respect cruel, mean leaders. Which is what you are. Cruel and mean."

"Please, Ophidia. Please help Archie before it's too late. I'm begging you. His colors are fading to white. He'll be gone soon."

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Ophidia tried to move towards Archie to give him the antidote. But the good snake was stuck fast. Magnus refused to let Ophidia move towards Archie.

"Please, Magnus. Let me help this poor little rainbow, I'm begging you. I'll never do anything again. I'll never speak or move in the opposite direction again. You'll be the master of our body. I must help this rainbow. Please, Magnus," Ophidia begged.

"Not a chance, Ophidia. This is who I am. It's who I've always been. It's who I'll always be."

"Bee! Did someone say bee?" the Queen said as she landed on Magnus's head. "I'll sting him. It'll inhibit him so he can't stop you, Ophidia."

Magnus wasn't going to give up that easy. It quickly spun around, causing the Queen to be flung off the back of its head. The Queen landed again. Magnus twisted its neck around Ophidia. The twin snake spun around on the ground for a moment. As soon as it stopped, the Queen Bee landed on one of the snake heads.

"No, no, my Queen, don't sting me! I'm Ophidia."

The bee quickly flew to the other head. "No, my Queen. Please don't sting me. You're on the wrong head. I'm Ophidia."

Oz looked at the two heads, one after another. "Oh, no!" he shouted to himself. "Which one is which?"

"Oz, help me. Which one is which?" shouted the Queen.

"Oz, in a panic shouted, "The one on the left!"

"Are you sure?" the bee asked in a panic.

"Oh, no! I don't know. The one on the right," Oz said as he put his wings to his head.

"No. Don't hurt me. I'm Ophidia. Sting the other head"

"Don't listen to him. I'm Ophidia. I promise," said the other snake head, as the Queen buzzed rapidly from one head to the other.

Oz was in a flap. He didn't know which one was which. He looked over at the little rainbow. Archie had nearly turned pure white. He looked back at the two-headed snake and the Queen, his wings still on his head.

"What'll I do? What'll I do? What'll I do?" he repeated to himself. He looked at one of the

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heads and then the other as they switched positions, shouting that one was Ophidia while the other insisted they were Ophidia.

The Queen looked sad. She knew she couldn't take the chance in case she harmed the wrong snake-head. They would all be done for if Magnus got to them without the help of Ophidia.

Oz looked at one of the heads. He caught eyes with it and stared at its eyes for a few moments. Mesmerized by the snake's eyes, he asked, "Please, Ophidia. Help my friend."

12

The Bad Head

The snake gazed into Oz's eyes, while the other head pleaded for the bee not to harm it. The snake gazing at Oz turned to the other head, and with that, the snake bit the other snake right behind its jaw. Oz froze with shock as the Queen flew to him. They paused for a moment, which felt like an eternity.

They watched as the bitten head let out a screech. The bitten head slumped, lifeless. They continued to watch, in shock, as the lifeless head slowly turned to dust, leaving just one head. The single-headed snake uncoiled and rose above the three of them.

Archie was close to turning fully white. The Queen flew to his side. Oz had never been

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as scared as he was that very moment. He held firm. He stretched his wings as wide as they could go. He made himself look as big as possible. He was ready to defend his friend from whatever was about to happen next.

"Move out of my way," commanded the snake.

"I will not. Who are you?"

The Queen flew up from Archie and faced off the snake. "I will summon every bee in the land. You'll pay for what you are about to do, Magnus, you will surely pay for what you have become."

"Move out of my way. Quickly! Archie doesn't have much time," the snake demanded.

Oz looked at the Queen. Still in shock, they cleared the way for the snake.

The snake leaned over and bit Archie on the arm, sinking her two fangs into the little rainbow's skin. The snake looked at the Queen and Oz for a moment and with that it slithered away into the grass. Just then it stopped and turned around and in a much softer, somber, thoughtful voice, Ophidia spoke.

"Thank you. Thank Archie, too. I must go now. I must pay for what I have done. The other

snakes will be looking for me. But what I have done has given me freedom. Your little friend has never seen me. Nor will he. But he has saved me. He has given me my freedom. Thank you, my Queen. Thank you, wise owl."

Ophidia vanished into the overgrowth.

"Goodbye Ophidia," said the Queen.

"Thank you, Ophidia," said Oz.

The two of them turned slowly towards the little rainbow.

"It's working, his colors are coming back!" the owl said excitedly to the bee.

The bee buzzed around the rainbow laying on the ground. "Green, blue, violet, orange, red, yellow."

"Did you say orange?" the owl asked with a bit of confusion.

"Ophidia must have given him the color orange when she bit him."

"Who is Ophidia?" asked Archie as he stood up in front of them, all colorful and full of life. Well, nearly all colorful. He looked around, confused, as if nothing had happened.

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"Oh, no one! Just an old friend," said Oz. He looked at the Queen. They both smiled at each other.

"Yeah. No one you'd know, Archie."

"Have you noticed anything about yourself, Archie?" asked the owl.

Archie looked down and noticed that he was only missing one color. "Red, green, blue, violet, yellow and.... orange!" the rainbow said with a smile. He did a little dance in front of Oz and the Queen.

"I've nearly got all my colors! I've nearly got all my colors! I said, I've nearly got all my colors!"

The owl and bee joined in. "He's nearly got all his colors! He's nearly got all his colors!"

After a few moments of joy, they stopped. Archie sat on a small tree stump and pondered "Where did I get orange from?"

"Not sure, buddy," said the Owl, shaking his head. "You had five of them, then you fell asleep. You woke up with six now. Maybe it was the forest or something."

"You deserved it anyway, Archie," the bee said, moving the conversation along.

13

The Last Color

“What now guys? What’s next? Where to?” questioned the rainbow.

“South,” said the owl as he spun up into the air.

“He hasn’t let us down yet, Archie,” said the Queen.

“South it is, so,” said the little rainbow.

The three friends got up off the tree trunk and started on their final journey. The search for one more color. The elusive color indigo.

“It’s such a strange color,” said the bee.

“What is?” asked the owl.

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"The color indigo," replied the bee.

"It's a funny old color, all right," said the rainbow. "It's not purple, but it's not violet. It's kind of in between."

"No. It's a normal color. It's not funny. Yes, it is in between violet and purple. It's not a strange color," said the perplexed owl.

"What are you so defensive about anyway, Oz? Sure, you're purple! Archie said.

"Nothing. I'm just saying that indigo is a good color. It doesn't get the respect it deserves."

"The respect it deserves! It's a color, not a person, Oz," said the Queen.

"Yeah, well, I'm just saying. It's a color. That's all," the owl finished that topic.

They continued walking south, the three friends together, minus one color.

Oz flew ahead. "What's that noise?" he asked with alarm.

"What noise? You're hearing things again," said the rainbow.

"Yeah. The last time I heard a rustle like this one, there was a little Ice White Cub

following us," the owl said as he went into detective mode.

"Really? Do you think he's following us again?" the bee asked.

"I don't know why. But I have a feeling he is," Oz said as he flew up into the air.

"Don't get your knickers in a twist, little owl. Yes. It's me," the Ice White Cub revealed himself from the overgrowth of the forest's edge.

"I knew it! You little sneaker!" the owl said with a delighted, wry smirk, knowing he was right.

"Hello, Ice White Cub. What are you doing here?" Archie asked.

"I'm here to tell you something, in thanks for what you did for me when I was lost. I was asleep and I heard something, or something came to me in my sleep. A voice told me something about you and what you have to do," said the cub.

"Well, spit it out, little cub!" demanded the owl.

The cub looked at the owl. "Calm down. I will."

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"Calm down!" said the owl angrily, as Archie and the Queen laughed.

Oz glared at them. "What are you two laughing at?"

"Calm down," the rainbow said.

Oz was shaking his head in annoyance.

"Never in the history of calming down has Oz ever calmed down by being told to calm down," the rainbow proclaimed.

"That's the truest thing you've ever said, Archie," the owl agreed.

"It was a rhyme or a poem," said the cub.

"Is it of importance to us?" asked the rainbow.

"It sure is."

"Well, as I said, little cub, spit it out," demanded the owl.

The cub spoke in riddle and rhyme.

The time has come to turn to someone, it'll be better for Archie in the long run.

Change your direction from the beginning, or you'll just end up spinning.

The color is closer than you think, you'll be there as quick as a wink.

If you don't, you'll never learn, things will happen if you take a turn.

"That's it?" asked the owl.

"That's it. I just think you need to think about it. I don't know what it means," said the cub.

"HMMMM," said the Queen. "A lot about turning, spinning and direction. Should we stay going south or go a different direction?"

"The color is closer that you think," said the owl. "But you need to change your direction. That's a bit confusing. It's either here or not here."

Archie was just as confused as his comrades. "If we're close, why should we turn around, or change direction?"

"Let's go west!" said the little rainbow.

"Why are you going west? Please explain!" said the cranky owl.

"Because I just want to do what I'm told."

"I tell you what to do. We should go south. I've been right all the time. I haven't led you astray...yet"

"You don't have to be so controlling, you know. Why can't I make a decision by myself?"

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"You can. I'm just saying, why would you trust yourself, when you can trust me?"

"Stop treating me like a baby! I'm not a baby. I'm a grown rainbow. You may have led us in the right direction, but I made some really important decisions on getting my own colors back, too.

"So, you're an adult now? You can do it all by yourself, you don't need my help anymore?"

"Don't be like that, Oz. You're my best friend. I'm just trying to make one decision by myself."

The Queen buzzed in, not feeling that the argument between the two best friends was going to improve anytime soon.

"Why don't we just go west for a little while?" She looked at the two stubborn friends. "Maybe Archie is right. Maybe we do need to switch it up a little."

"Fine so," said the owl as he stormed off in a westerly direction.

The Queen and the rainbow followed quickly behind, not wishing to upset the owl anymore.

"Wait up, wait up, Oz!" shouted the Queen.

The owl turned scolded his friends from a distance.

"I've risked my neck for you, Archie! I helped you pull that red deer out of the water, that giant Red Irish Deer. One stamp and that thing could have killed me. I stuck with you when you needed to find your colors."

Archie stopped and stared at Oz. The Queen landed on the rainbow's shoulder.

The owl continued his rant.

"I risked life and wing. Then that Wolf. I don't mind the Ice White Cub; I could have outrun that little fella. But his mother? She'd have eaten me in one bite. I was actually in her jaws! I was in her JAWS. That Ice Blue Wolf, she scared the life out of me. But I played along, I hung tough."

Oz was in his stride now, milking it for all that it was worth.

"Oz...*amm*, maybe you shouldn't say too much right now. Someone might get upset," said the rainbow.

"Upset? I'm the one who's upset! I'm not upsetting the Ice White Cub. I'm just making an

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observation about his mother. I'm sure she wouldn't eat me in one gulp, I'm just saying that she could eat me in one gulp if she wanted to. But I stayed with you."

The owl shook his head in disbelief, annoyed that he had been interrupted by the rainbow. "And... the snake. Oh my, oh my! Talk about getting eaten by one? That snake would have eaten me twice with his two heads! Scared to my bones, I was."

The Queen thought it was time to interrupt the owl this time, before he said something he'd regret. "Oz, just wait there. We need to talk to you. We need to inform you what's going on behind your back."

The outraged Owl was even getting even more pent-up, "I know what's going on behind my back! You too are stabbing me in the back! After all I've done for you. Disrespecting me, getting me nearly eaten, not once, not twice, not three times, getting me blown up by that crazy professor!"

"*Ammm*, Oz. Please! You need not say anymore," the rainbow begged.

"I'm only getting started. That looney professor! Firing elements and compounds around. Blowing the forest up. Nearly killed me and you, Archie. The madness!"

The Queen buzzed over to the owl.
"Look west!"

"I will not look west! I'll walk west when I'm good and ready. Three times I nearly got eaten. Four times, actually! I've nearly forgotten about the time I could have got eaten by a crocodile, a big mean vicious rainbow-eating crocodile, who you shouldn't have trusted. Who in their right mind would get up on a stranger's back for a lift across a river? Who would get up on a crocodile? Who? Who, I ask you!"

"I'm not a crocodile."

"Who said that?" asked the confused Owl.

Archie helped him out. "He's not a crocodile, he's an alligator."

The owl stood there with his wings outstretched, a grin on his face. "Is he behind me?"

The bee and rainbow nodded.

"Is he within chomping distance?"

The bee and rainbow shook their heads.

"Is the Great Irish Deer there?"

The two nodded.

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"The Ice Blue Wolf?"

They nodded again.

"The Professor?"

"Yes," said Archie.

"The two-headed snake?"

"No," said the bee.

Archie looked confused but carried on with the charade. Oz slowly turned around, nervous to see the other animals again after what he'd said about them.

"I'm an alligator, not a crocodile," said the green reptile.

Oz had turned right around. He looked at the alligator, the Professor, the Ice White Cub, the Ice Blue Wolf, the Great Irish Red Deer. He turned back at the Queen and felt relieved that he had seen them all again. Archie and the Queen approached the owl. They were now all standing in a circle around Oz.

The owl became a little bit nervous.

"Why are you all surrounding me? I'm just a stupid purple owl with anger management issues!"

"We're not," said the professor. "We just want you to know how much we heard."

"I only spoke the truth."

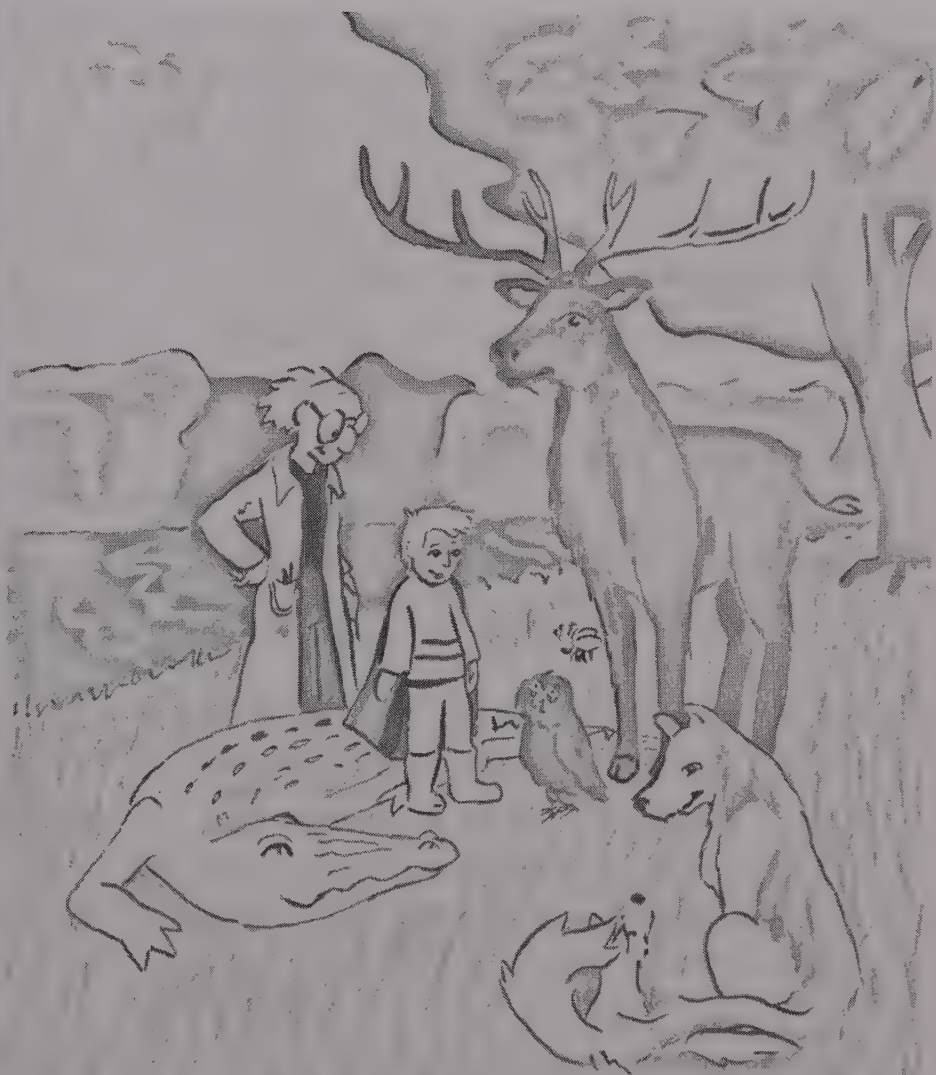
The Great Red Irish Deer spoke.

"It's true, wise old owl. You did speak words of truth. Nearly everything you said was the truth. You are a great friend. You did put yourself in harm's way."

The Ice Blue Wolf stepped to the front. "This is why you're such an important part of this adventure."

The wolf moved and sat in front to the owl. "The only thing you didn't tell the truth about, because you honestly didn't know, is that your color is indigo. It's not purple, or violet. It's indigo."

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Justin Conboy

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"Indigo!" shouted the rainbow. "That's the only color I'm missing."

"Yes," said the Professor. "The only color you're missing and the one color that has been with you since the start, through thick and thin. Sorry again about not knowing the difference between indigo and violet.... And purple!"

"You mean I'm indigo?" asked the owl.

The queen swooped in. "Are you sure you don't mean purple?"

Owl threw a scolded look back at the bee.

"Finally, I believe I know what my color is. It's not purple. It's not lilac, not violet, it's indigo."

"We're here, Oz, to tell you that you're the key, you're the color," said the cub.

Oz looked at Archie and stared at him for a moment, looking at his six colors and his one strip of dark grey. He opened his wings and stretched them. Archie opened his arms, ready for embrace.

The owl and the rainbow bounded into each other's arms; Oz sure that this best friend hug would pass on color. The two best friends embraced. The professor, the deer, the

alligator, the bee, the two wolves watched in anticipation.

The two friends clambered onto each other and fell on their bums. Nothing happened.

Everyone looked at each other. Oz sat on his bum; a little bit confused. Archie shook himself off.

The Ice White Cub stepped forward. "Are you okay?"

"Yes," said Archie.

"Yes, I'm okay," said Oz.

"I suppose I'm just going to be stuck with six colors now."

"Oh no, Archie. We didn't go through all this to give up eighty-five point seven, one four, two, eight, five recurring percent of the way," said the clever old owl.

"Surely there must be a way," said the bee.

The Ice White Cub repeated.

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Archie shook his head. The queen couldn't think of anything to say.

Then all of a sudden, the owl crouched small and burst up into the air shouting "You'll just end up Spinning!"

The indigo color shone from the owl as he spun into the air. The color surrounded everyone as Oz dove from the sky into his best friend's arms. He picked Archie up and spun into the air with him.

BOOOOOOOOM!

The colors were complete. The indigo color had embraced the little rainbow.

"Archie, look at you!" cried the Queen.

Archie looked down at his best friend. "Are you alright, Oz?"

"I'm fine, Archie. I'm just so happy. Did you get your color back?"

Oz looked down and checked Archie's colors. "Red, from the Great Irish Red Deer."

"Check," said Archie.

Oz continued. "Orange, from am....
Oph... I mean the forest."

Archie scrunched his face in confusion again. "Check."

"Blue, from the Ice Blue Wolf."

"Check."

"Violet from the professor's explosion," Oz said as he shook his head. The Professor stared into the air.

"Check," said Archie as he shook his head too.

"Yellow, from the Queen Bee."

"Definite check."

"Green from the crocodile."

"Check," said the alligator.

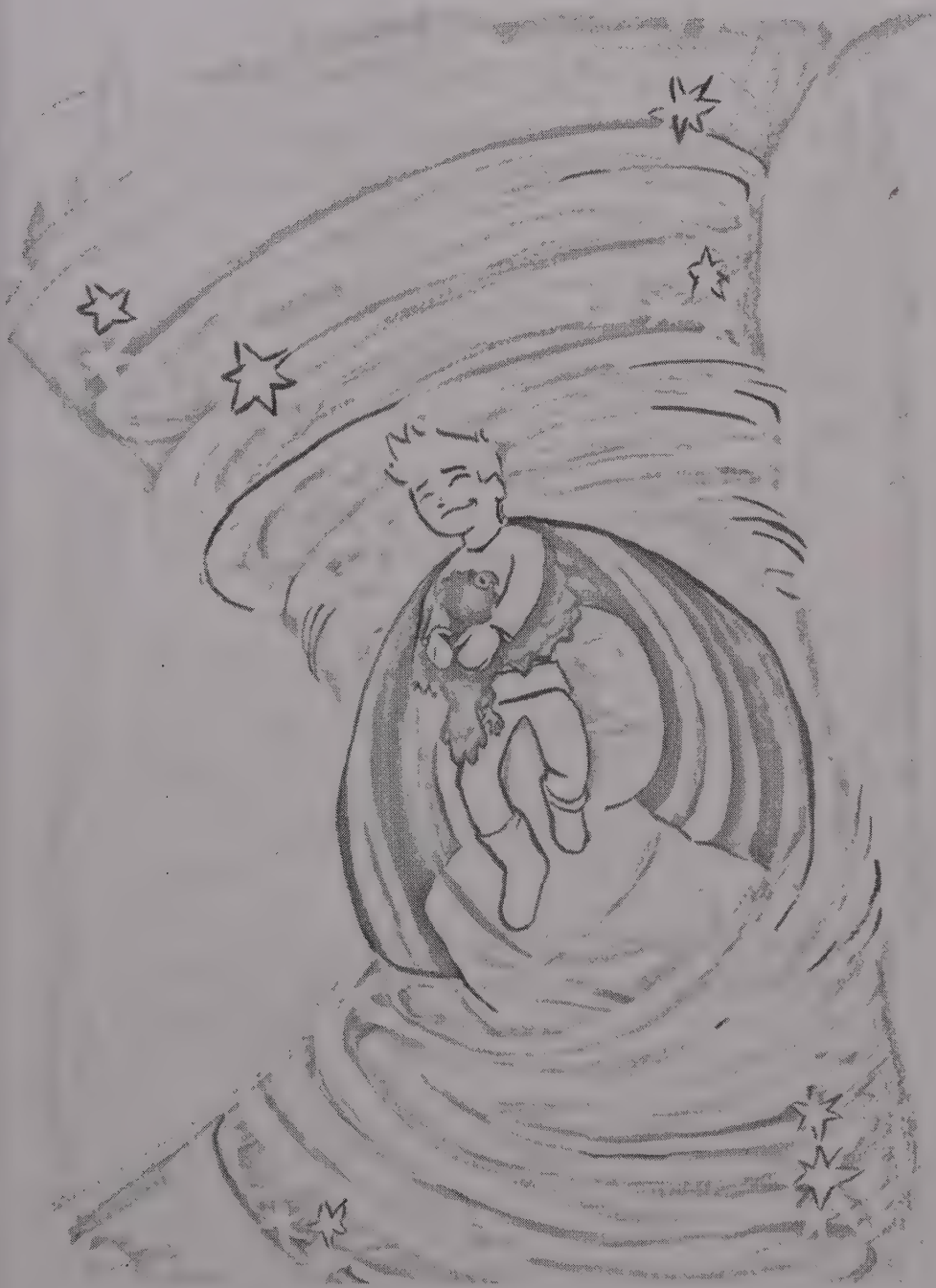
"Sorry, alligator," Oz said nervously. "How many is that now?"

The crowd all answered together with a smile "Six!"

"*Aaaannnnnnnddddd* - indigo from Oz!" shouted Oz.

"Yes!" shouted everyone.

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Justin Conboy

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"It has always been you. You've always been with your friend," said the queen.

"Yippee!" shouted the Professor as they all celebrated Archie getting all his colors back.

Archie and Oz embraced again.

"I love you, Archie," said Oz.

"I love you, Oz. You're the greatest friend anyone could ever have."

The group all cheered and hugged as they celebrated the friendship and love between these two great friends.

"I suppose we'll head north! Back to the Riverlands," proposed Archie.

"Yes. Back to the Riverlands," confirmed Oz.

"Home is where the heart is," said the Queen.

The group all turned north and made their way up along the river bank, back to the Riverlands.

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The Little Rainbow Who Lost His Colors', is a story about Archie the little Rainbow and his best friend Oz the owl.

The two get caught in a terrible storm, where Archie loses his colors. He is just 'greyscale'. After the storm settles, Oz promises Archie that he'll help him find his colors.

They set off on their adventure through The Riverlands in search of Archie colors.

This is a story of loyalty, kindness, bravery and above all, friendship.

Justin Conboy is a novelist from, Galway, Ireland. He has published two novels, Code Thief and RQ26 - Armageddon Was Just the Beginning. He is currently working on adapting Code Thief into a screenplay.

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